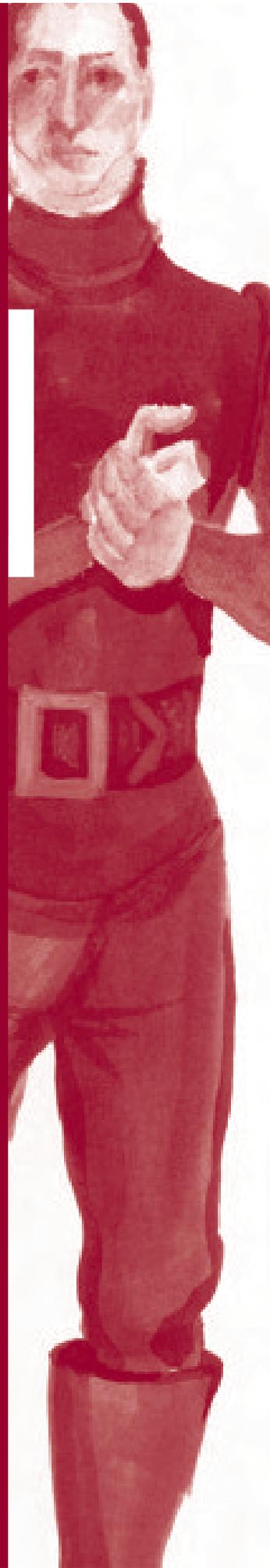


richard III



Teacher Handbook

chicago
shakespeare theater
on navy pier

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Cover illustrations: Original renderings by Costume Designer Susan E. Mickey for CST's 2009 production of *Richard III*

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A special thank-you goes to Education Intern Kelby Siddons, whose contributions to this handbook have made it brader, deeper and more playful.

Barbara Gaines
Artistic Director

Criss Henderson
Executive Director



Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

In its first 23 seasons, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of nearly 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of mainstage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year for student and family audiences. Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools.

The 2009–10 Season offers a student matinee series for Chicago Shakespeare Theater's productions of Shakespeare's *Richard III* in the fall and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the spring, as well as Noël Coward's *Private Lives* this winter. Also this winter, Chicago Shakespeare presents especially for students a 75-minute abridged adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, at its theater on Navy Pier and on tour to schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage.

Marilyn J. Halperin, *Director of Education*
Andie Thomalla, *Education Outreach Manager*
Rachel Hillmer, *Education Associate*



RICHARD III



“...THE CONQUERORS
MAKE WAR UPON THEMSELVES, BROTHER TO BROTHER,
BLOOD TO BLOOD, SELF AGAINST SELF.”

-DUCHESS OF YORK, ACT 2, SCENE 4

A country torn apart by a century-long dynastic struggle for the crown. Families turned against themselves. Brother against brother. Child against parent. Blinded by ambition, people have lost sight of the basic bonds of community and the blood that ties them.

Fifteenth-century England is a perfect place to live and work—if you are the tyrant and dissembler Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whose murderous rise to power depends upon the fabric of a society unraveled by mistrust and by fear.

The bloody landscape of *Richard III* is the public world of politics. But it is the private, subterranean world of the unconscious—of dreams, of intuitions, and of the spirits of the dead—that fomenting below the surface will not rest. Distracted by the power plays of politics, Richard nor his victims listen. Until their ghosts return, reminding Richard of that other world and its irrepressible truths.

Team Shakespeare arts-in-education activities for *Richard III* are supported, in part, by **Baxter International**, with additional support from **Sheila Penrose** and **Ernie Mahaffey**.



ART THAT LIVES

Drama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave

paintings depict men disguised as animals. Since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate his experience. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it *is* human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our world.

A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they, too, are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting.

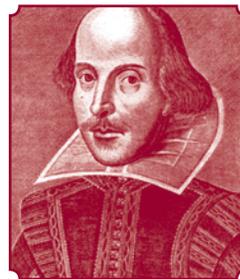
The experience of live performance is of a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely-fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play... to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

—Tyrone Guthrie, 1962

HOW CAN YOU HELP US GIVE YOU THE BEST PERFORMANCE WE CAN?

- ◆ Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—as an honest, spontaneous response to the story, not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- ◆ Please keep all “noisemakers”—food, gum, electronics, etc.—back at school or on the bus! In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included...
- ◆ All electronics must be fully turned off. Flashes on cameras, the glow of an open cell phone, or a lone iPod going off under someone's seat can all make the actors lose their focus and can even be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.



BARD'S BIO

Some have raised doubts whether Shakespeare, with his average education and humble origins, possibly could have written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. Was this man “Shakespeare” a mere decoy for the true author who, for his (or her) own reasons could not reveal his (or her...) true identity—someone, at least, who could boast of a university education, a noble upbringing, and experience in the world outside England's borders? There are worldwide societies, eminent actors,

as well as a few scholars who insist upon the existence of a “Shakespeare conspiracy.” But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare’s death, did these theories arise. To all appearances, Shakespeare’s contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

The exact day of William Shakespeare’s birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally conducted three days after a child’s birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564 and consequently, his birthday is celebrated on April 23.

His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford’s grammar school, where he would have acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare’s only son, died at age 11. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare’s life. Consequently, these seven years are filled with legend and conjecture, and we do not know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an “upstart crow” for presuming to write plays (when he was a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

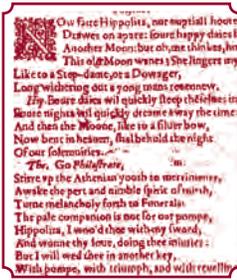
Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theater company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, which soon became one of London’s two principal companies. The company’s name changed to the King’s Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 plays. His earliest plays, including *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. His great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare’s final dramatic form—the so-called “Romances,” which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These were the works of a playwright no longer bound in any way by the constraints of historical and tragic conventions.

Although single volumes of approximately half his plays were published in Shakespeare’s lifetime, there is no evidence that he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, that 36 of his plays were published in the First Folio. Dramatic scripts were only just beginning to be considered “literature” as we understand it today, and so it is not at all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare’s plays in published form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare oversaw the publication of three of his narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

By 1592, Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London’s leading theater company. After nearly 20 years in the theater, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.
—John Dryden, 1688



THE FIRST FOLIO

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as its script and acting “blueprint.” The First Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors

nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to our actors about what words to emphasize and about which ideas are important. In Shakespeare’s own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they can still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you’re hearing language that’s 400 years younger than ours.

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for publication. In Shakespeare’s day, plays were not considered literature at all. When a play was published—if it was published at all—it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a “quarto,” the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare’s death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an oversized book called a “folio,” that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, showed absolutely no interest or involvement in the publication of his plays, and during Shakespeare’s own lifetime, only half of his plays were ever printed—and those quartos. It was only after the playwright’s death when two of Shakespeare’s close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, the First Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The First Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, the playwright’s handwritten manuscripts, various versions of some of the plays already published—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the “authority” of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare’s First Folio took five “compositors” two and one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago’s Newberry Library contains a First Folio in its rich collections (and it can be viewed in small groups by appointment).

A key to understanding Shakespeare’s language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God’s final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980



SHAKESPEARE’S ENGLAND

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says Shakespearean scholar

David Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and an illegitimate monarch. The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth’s reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. Religious conflict during the Tudors’ reign pervaded every aspect of English life—particularly its politics.

Elizabeth had no heir, and throughout her reign the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation’s peace—and provided a recurrent subject of Shakespeare’s plays. While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, the Earl of Essex, one of the Queen’s favorite courtiers, rebelled



against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the forced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who "enclosed" what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up.

London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. A rising middle class for the first time in English history aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and Catholic doctrine into an Episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by Rome's Pope. Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered.

"Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," says David Bevington, and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Early Modern Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchs, like Queen Elizabeth I was absolute. She and her subjects viewed the monarch as God's deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare's history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God, but could not protect Elizabeth from rebellion at home, even from her closest advisors, or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. James, ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), clearly lacked Elizabeth's political acumen and skill, and his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. He antagonized the religious left, and his court became more aligned with the Catholic right. It would be James' son, Charles I, who would be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s.



THE RENAISSANCE THEATER

A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first

commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before Shakespeare first arrived on the London theater scene—a convergence of two events that would change history. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions

governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of “Shoreditch.” The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London’s brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare’s day were legally given the status of “vagabonds.” They were considered little better than common criminals—unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth’s court as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King’s Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain’s company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city’s jurisdiction as the first public theaters in England.



AN ELIZABETHAN TRAVELER’S SKETCH OF THE SWAN, ONE OF THE FIRST PUBLIC THEATERS IN ENGLAND

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform the courtyard of an inn or town square into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, storage for props and costumes, and as stage. Their horses pulled the

cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered around to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible—the form of theater that endured throughout the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the enacted stories became more secular. Public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London’s walls came to be feared as places where physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another. They arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day’s wages for a skilled worker. They were diverse and demanding group, and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic.

A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare’s plays were performed in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play’s royalty.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man’s shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

Shakespeare’s plays were performed in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting.

In 1642, the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During the 18 years of Commonwealth rule, years where the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost. The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare’s plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original

scripts to suit the audience’s contemporary tastes. It is left to scholars of Early Modern English drama to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind.



COURTYARD-STYLE THEATER

David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination to the question of what kind of space is best suited

to presenting Shakespeare’s plays. Taylor, who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theater’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing, acting, and design elements.

The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. “The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the



CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater.”

“This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was

about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn’s balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always “fed” by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor reflects. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Speaking of his experience directing on a similarly designed stage in Stratford, Ontario, Tyrone Guthrie once said: “Theatrical performance is a form of ritual; the audience is not asked to subscribe to an illusion but to participate in the ritual. . . The attraction for me of the ‘open stage’ as opposed to the proscenium is primarily this: that it stresses the ritual as opposed to the illusionary quality of performance.”

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. With their deep thrust stages, both were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience. Prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice, but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls help diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space.

Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.”

WORLD HISTORY

1300

- 1326 Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348 Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349 Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387 Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
- ca.1440 Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472 Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492 Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497 Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

1500

- 1501-4 Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503 Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512 Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518 License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorenz de Gominzot
- 1519 Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519 Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522 Luther's translation of the New Testament

1525

- 1531 Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533 Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539 Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540 G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541 Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1550

- 1558 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562 John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564 Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565 Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570 Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573 Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

1575

- 1576 Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City
- Burbage erects first public theater in England (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577 Drake's trip around the world
- 1580 Essays of Montaigne published
- 1582 Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway
- Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened
- 1585 Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

ca. 1592-1595

COMEDIES

- Love's Labor's Lost
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Taming of the Shrew

HISTORIES

- 1, 2, 3 Henry VI
- ◆ Richard III
- King John

TRAGEDIES

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

SONNETS

probably written in this period

- 1587 Mary Queen of Scots executed
- 1588 Destruction of the Spanish Armada
- 1592 Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1593-4 Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months
- 1595 Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John
- 1596 Death of son Hamnet, age 11
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
- 1597 Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights, buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1599 Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with Shakespeare as part-owner

1600

- 1602 Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens
- 1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I;
Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I
- 1603-11 Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)
- 1605 Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published
- 1607 Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall;
Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on American mainland
- 1608 A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed in Virginia by John Smith
Galileo constructs astronomical telescope
- 1609 Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater, becomes winter home of the King's Men
- 1611 The Authorized "King James Version" of the Bible published
- 1613 Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
- 1614 Globe Theatre rebuilt
- 1615 Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time
- 1616 Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney
Death of William Shakespeare, age 52
- 1618 Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church
- 1619 First African slaves arrive in Virginia
- 1623 The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

1625

- 1625 James I dies, succeeded by Charles I
- 1632 Ai due massimi sistemi of Galileo
- 1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636 Harvard College founded at Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642 Civil War in England begins
- 1642 Puritans close theaters throughout England until following the Restoration of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II
- 1649 Charles I beheaded
- 1649 Commonwealth declared

ca. 1596-1600

COMEDIES

- The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

HISTORIES

- Richard II
- 1,2 Henry IV
- Henry V

TRAGEDIES

- Julius Caesar

ca. 1601-1609

COMEDIES

- Troilus and Cressida
- All's Well That Ends Well

TRAGEDIES

- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus
- Measure for Measure

ca. 1609-1613

ROMANCES

- Pericles
- Cymbeline
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest
- The Two Noble Kinsmen

HISTORIES

- Henry VIII

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Edward IV, *King of England*

Queen Elizabeth, *wife to Edward IV,
previously Elizabeth Woodville, Lady Grey*

Lord Rivers, *brother to Queen Elizabeth*

Lord Grey, *son to Queen Elizabeth by a previous marriage*

The Marquess of Dorset, *son to Queen Elizabeth
by a previous marriage*

Edward, Prince of Wales, *elder son to King Edward IV*

Richard, Duke of York, *younger son to King Edward IV*

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, *later King Richard III*

George, Duke of Clarence, *his brother*

Duchess of York, *mother to Edward IV, George and Richard*

Sir William Catesby

Lord Francis Lovell

Sir Richard Ratcliffe

Sir James Tyrrel

Duke of Buckingham

Lord William Hastings

followers of Richard III

Lady Anne, *widow of Edward, Prince of Wales,
and later wife of Richard III*

Queen Margaret, *widow of King Henry VI,
and mother of Edward, Prince of Wales*

Sir Robert Brakenbury, *Lieutenant of the Tower*

Lord Cardinal, *Archbishop of Canterbury*

John Morton, *Bishop of Ely*

Thomas Rotherham, *Archbishop of York*

Lord Mayor of London

Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, *later King Henry VII*

Sir James Blunt, *follower of Richmond*

Lord Stanley, *Earl of Derby, supporter of Richmond*

**Scrivener, Ghosts, Murderers, Messengers, Lords,
Attendants, Citizens, Soldiers**

TIME AND PLACE: Fifteenth-century London and
its environs

THE STORY

Three generations and almost 100 years have passed since the Lancastrian Henry of Bolingbroke usurped the throne of the Yorkist king, Richard II. A long and bloody dynastic struggle between the powerful houses of York and Lancaster tore at the fabric of fifteenth-century England.

King Edward IV of York has reclaimed the throne, and England prospers in a rare moment of peace. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the king's younger brother misshapen since birth, now embarks upon an elaborate crime spree to secure the crown. Lady Anne mourns the deaths of her father-in-law, the deposed King Henry VI, and her husband the Prince of Wales, both murdered by Richard. As she follows the funeral procession of Henry VI, Richard addresses her, transfiguring Lady Anne's curses into a betrothal of marriage. He plots his brother Clarence's execution and, placing the guilt on his brother King Edward, hastens the king's own death. As Richard reprises the role of peacemaker, he pits courtiers against courtier, confiding in them one moment and turning on them the next.

Queen Margaret, the banished widow of Henry VI, returns to the Court and, cursing her usurpers, prophesizes their doom. One by one as Richard's detractors are executed, each recalls the fulfillment of Margaret's prophecies. With King Edward's death, Richard claims the throne after declaring the king's two sons illegitimate and locking them away in the Tower of London.

The crown sits uneasily upon the new king, who constructs his brutal reign out of the murders of his closest associates, the young princes, and his wife. A rebellion against Richard's tyranny gathers around Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, the last heir of the Lancastrian line. As the two armies meet, the ghosts of Richard's victims rise to torment him. Victorious, Richmond is crowned King Henry VII, and the bloody Wars of the Roses come to an end, ushering in the reign of the Tudors.



photo: Liz Lauren

RICHARD III (BRENDAN CORBALIS) AND QUEEN ELIZABETH (LISA DODSON) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

ACT-BY-ACT SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The wars between the House of York and the House of Lancaster have temporarily ceased, and the deposed Yorkist **King Edward IV** has reclaimed the throne. The king's hunchbacked brother, **Richard, Duke of Gloucester**, sets his sites on his brother's throne despite the many people in his way. Richard arouses suspicion against their third brother, **George, Duke of Clarence**, who is arrested for treason and taken to the Tower of London. Richard informs his brother Clarence that **Queen Elizabeth** urged his imprisonment, and promises to secure his release as soon as possible. During a funeral procession for the former Lancastrian king, Henry VI, Richard attempts to seduce **Lady Anne**, daughter-in-law to Henry VI and widow of Edward, Prince of Wales—both, according to Shakespeare's story, murdered by Richard and his family. In spite of her contempt for him, Lady Anne accepts his ring after Richard claims that it was his love for her that drove him to murder her husband and her king. Richard visits the court where Edward IV

lays dying, and is confronted by the now-widowed **Queen Margaret**, who curses him. Richard turns and convinces members of the nobility—**Lord Stanley**, **Lord Hastings** and the **Duke of Buckingham**—that it was Queen Elizabeth and her kindred **Woodvilles** who have poisoned the mind of the king against Clarence. Clarence, haunted by his dreams, attempts to repent for his sins against his brother Edward and the murders of Henry VI and his son. His confessions fall on deaf ears and he is murdered by Richard's henchmen.

ACT II

An ailing and depressed King Edward IV gathers the members of the hostile factions within his Court for one last attempt at peace. Richard arrives and announces that their brother Clarence is dead, and King Edward, stricken with guilt, dies. The young Edward, Prince of Wales, is sent for to take his father's place as king. Meeting on the street and discussing the news of the king's death, the citizens of the realm fear the unknown ahead. Richard and Buckingham order the imprisonment at Pomfret Castle of Queen Elizabeth's strongest supporters, **Lord Grey**, **Lord Rivers** and **Lord Vaughan**. The **Duchess of York**, mother to Richard, Clarence and Edward IV, despairs over this violent history of brother against brother. Fearing for her safety, Queen Elizabeth seeks sanctuary with the Archbishop of Canterbury for herself and her second son, the young Duke of York.

ACT III

Richard arrives in London with the young Edward, Prince of Wales, and, feigning concern over the welfare of his brother's child, appoints himself the prince's guardian. He also has the two young princes placed "for protection" in the Tower of London. Learning from one of his henchmen, **Sir William Catesby**, that Hastings is a loyal follower of the young Prince of Wales, he summons Hastings to a council meeting, ostensibly called to discuss plans for the upcoming coronation of Edward. Richard accuses Hastings of plotting against him and, when Hastings denies the accusations, Richard accuses him of treason and sentences him to death. Meanwhile, the supporters of the prince (Lord Grey, Rivers and Vaughan, held as prisoners at Pomfret Castle) are executed.

Richard and Buckingham persuade the Lord Mayor that Hastings poses a danger warranting his prompt execution. Buckingham, sent to speak to the citizens of the immoral behavior of the late King Edward, informs them that Edward and his royal children are illegitimate. The people are not swayed, so Buckingham stages a small scene: Richard, prayer book in hand and flanked by clergymen, appears on cue; after repeated urging from the assembled and unwitting “cast,” Richard quits his objections and accepts the crown. Arrangements for his immediate coronation are made.

ACT IV

Queen Elizabeth, with the Duchess of York (Richard’s mother), and Lady Anne (now Richard’s wife) attempt to visit the young princes imprisoned in the Tower, but are refused entrance by Richard’s orders. Lord Stanley arrives and, informing the women that Richard has been named king, orders Lady Anne to Westminster to join her husband. Shocked at the news and fearing the worst, the women seek comfort among themselves. Richard asks Buckingham to dispatch of the young princes whose very existence threatens his crown. When Buckingham hesitates, Richard retaliates, and Buckingham leaves the Court. Richard summons an eager nobleman, **Sir James Tyrrel**, to see to the murder of the princes, and Richard orders Catesby to spread a rumor that Lady Anne is gravely ill: he intends now to marry **Elizabeth of York**, his niece, and daughter of the late Edward IV. He marries off his brother Clarence’s daughter to a man of insignificant rank, thus disarming yet another threat to the crown. Meanwhile, a growing tide of opposition threatens to rock Richard’s monarchy. The Marquess of Dorset flees to Brittany to join **Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond**, the last heir of the Lancastrian line, who with his army is preparing to invade England. When news of Richmond’s landing at Milford Haven reaches London, Buckingham leaves to join Richmond, but is captured by Richard’s forces and duly executed.

ACT V

The armies of Richmond and Richard prepare their camps on Bosworth Field. The night before the battle, the ghosts of Richard’s victims appear to him in terrifying dreams that foreshadow his defeat. By contrast, Richmond’s dreams assure him of victory as “God and good angels” are on his side. The next morning Richmond awakes brimming with confidence as he prepares to rid the nation of the bloody tyrant. Richard, shaken by the spirits of his victims, tries to ignore his pangs of conscience. Standing alone on the battlefield, he is at last overcome and slain by Richmond. The victorious Richmond is crowned Henry VII, and marries Elizabeth of York, thus uniting the houses of York and Lancaster and ushering in the reign of the Tudors.



photo: Liz Lauren

RICHMOND (MARK L. MONTGOMERY) AND RICHARD III (BRENDAN CORBALIS) IN CST’S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

WHO'S WHO IN RICHARD III

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who later becomes **King Richard III**, is the youngest brother of King Edward IV, who reigns as the play opens. A member of the powerful House of York, Shakespeare's Richard has been deformed since his inauspicious birth.

George, Duke of Clarence is the brother of Richard and Edward. As Richard's elder brother, he stands in his way of the crown.

The Duchess of York is the mother of King Edward IV, Richard, Clarence and the murdered Rutland, who is referenced in the opening scenes of *Richard III*.

King Edward IV is Richard's eldest brother, the husband of Queen Elizabeth, and the father of Edward, Prince of Wales and Richard, Duke of York. At the opening of *Richard III*, the king is ill, succumbing to diseases related to a lifetime of licentious behavior.

Queen Elizabeth is the wife of King Edward IV, and the mother of Edward, Prince of Wales, Richard, Duke of York, and Princess Elizabeth. Prior to her royal marriage, she was Lady Grey, the widow of a minor Lancastrian nobleman. Having rejected King Edward's advances, she maneuvered their marriage instead. As queen, she arranged powerful marriages for her family, the Woodvilles, and was spurned as a commoner by the powerful members of the Yorkist Court.

Jane Shore had once been mistress to King Edward, and later to Queen Elizabeth's brother and Lord Hastings. (Jane Shore is not a character in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, although she is frequently referred to.)

Edward, Prince of Wales, briefly crowned King Edward V, is 13 and the eldest son of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth. He is preparing to succeed his father when Richard shuts him away in the Tower of London.

Richard, Duke of York, is 11 and the second son of Edward and Elizabeth. He is imprisoned in the Tower with his brother Edward and murdered there at Richard's command.

Princess Elizabeth, the Yorkist daughter of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth, is the desired object of marriage for two great rivals—Richard III, her uncle, and Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, whom she marries. She is the mother

of Henry VIII and the grandmother of Queen Elizabeth I. (Princess Elizabeth is not a character in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, although she is referred to.)

Lady Anne Neville is the widow of the murdered Lancastrian Edward, Prince of Wales. She despises Richard, but succumbs to his proposal of marriage, and becomes **Queen Anne**.

Earl Rivers is Anthony Woodville, Queen Elizabeth's brother, and leader of the Woodville faction.

Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset and **Lord Richard Grey** are the Queen's sons by her first marriage.

Duke of Buckingham comes from a Lancastrian family, but when his father dies in battle, he is raised by King Edward IV as a Yorkist and is married to the Queen's sister. He is Richard's chief supporter in his rise to power until he hesitates to endorse Richard's wish to murder the two young princes.

Lord Hastings serves as Lord Chamberlain to King Edward. He backs Richard's rise to power but, when he balks at Richard's plan to prevent the succession of the Prince of Wales, he is executed.

Lord Stanley serves the Yorkist cause through much of this play, but his wife is the mother of Richard's rival, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond. Stanley betrays Richard in the Battle of Bosworth.

Sir William Catesby begins the play as an attendant to King Edward and a friend to Hastings. When Edward dies, he switches his allegiance to Richard.

Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, is a Lancastrian who, in his defeat of Richard III, is crowned Henry VII. Henry brings an end to the Wars of the Roses by his marriage to the Yorkist Princess Elizabeth, at last securely uniting the two warring families. Henry Tudor is the father of Henry VIII and the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth I, who head the great Tudor dynasty that ruled England during Shakespeare's lifetime.

Queen Margaret of Anjou, the widow of Lancastrian King Henry VI, is banished after her husband's death. Richard kills both her husband and her son, Edward, Prince of Wales.



THE WARS OF THE ROSES

(Bold names appear in Shakespeare's *Richard III*)

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who became **King Richard III**, lived from 1452 to 1485, a time when the Western world experienced a cultural earthquake.

Leonardo da Vinci, Columbus,

Michelangelo, Gutenberg and Copernicus lived during this period, and their discoveries and creations shaped a civilization that changed the world forever. The Turks captured Constantinople and conquered Athens, Bosnia and Herzegovina, shifting the balance of world power entirely. The world was shedding its medieval sensibilities and in its place emerged the Renaissance.

Richard III grew up during the Wars of the Roses, a bloody civil war extending over 30 years between the House of York (bearer of the white rose) and the House of Lancaster (bearer of the red rose). The Lancastrian monarch King Henry VI's mental state started to seriously deteriorate at the end of 1453, and Richard, Duke of York (father of Richard III), was made Protector of the Realm. Henry VI eventually recovered from his illness, but not before Henry VI's wife, **Queen Margaret**, had given birth to a son, Edward, Prince of Wales, who displaced Richard, Duke of York, as heir to the throne.

The Wars of the Roses erupted in 1455 when fighting broke out between Richard, Duke of York's supporters and King Henry VI's Lancastrian supporters—a feud whose roots stemmed back to the Lancastrian Henry IV's usurping of the crown from the Yorkist Richard II in 1399. In 1460, Henry VI was captured and forced to recognize Richard, Duke of York, as his heir apparent. As a result, Queen Margaret, whose son, Edward, Prince of Wales, was thus disinherited, retaliated by killing the Duke of York in the bloody Battle at Wakefield. But the following year, in 1461, **the Duke of York's eldest son, Edward** (Richard III's brother), defeated the Lancastrians

and recaptured the dynasty, for the Yorkists. He was later crowned **King Edward IV**.

All hope seemed lost for the Lancastrians, but a dispute between the Earl of Warwick and King Edward IV over the king's marriage in 1464 to a gentlewoman (though not a member of the nobility), Elizabeth Woodville, reignited the battle between the Yorkist factions at Court. With support from Louis XI of France, Henry VI's wife **Queen Margaret** teamed up with two key defectors from the Yorkist cause—Warwick and King Edward's brother, **George, Duke of Clarence**—and together they restored Henry VI to the throne in 1470. Edward IV and his younger brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III) went into exile.

Edward IV, refusing defeat, formed a series of alliances and reclaimed the crown the following year (1471). Queen Margaret's only son, Edward, Prince of Wales was killed in the Battle of Tewkesbury (and not at the hands of his captors, Richard and his brothers, as Shakespeare and his Tudor sources report). The Prince of Wales' widow, **Lady Anne Neville**, married Richard, Duke of Gloucester a year later, subsequently becoming **Queen Anne** when Richard was crowned king. Henry VI was captured and a few days later, presumably at Edward IV's order, assassinated in his prison at the Tower of London. (Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare's primary source, places the assassin's weapon in Richard's hands, though there is no historical evidence to associate Richard with King Henry VI's murder.) The reinstated King Edward IV banished Queen Margaret from England, who then fled in exile to France, never to return (though Shakespeare departs from his sources here to stage her dramatic presence in the English Court).

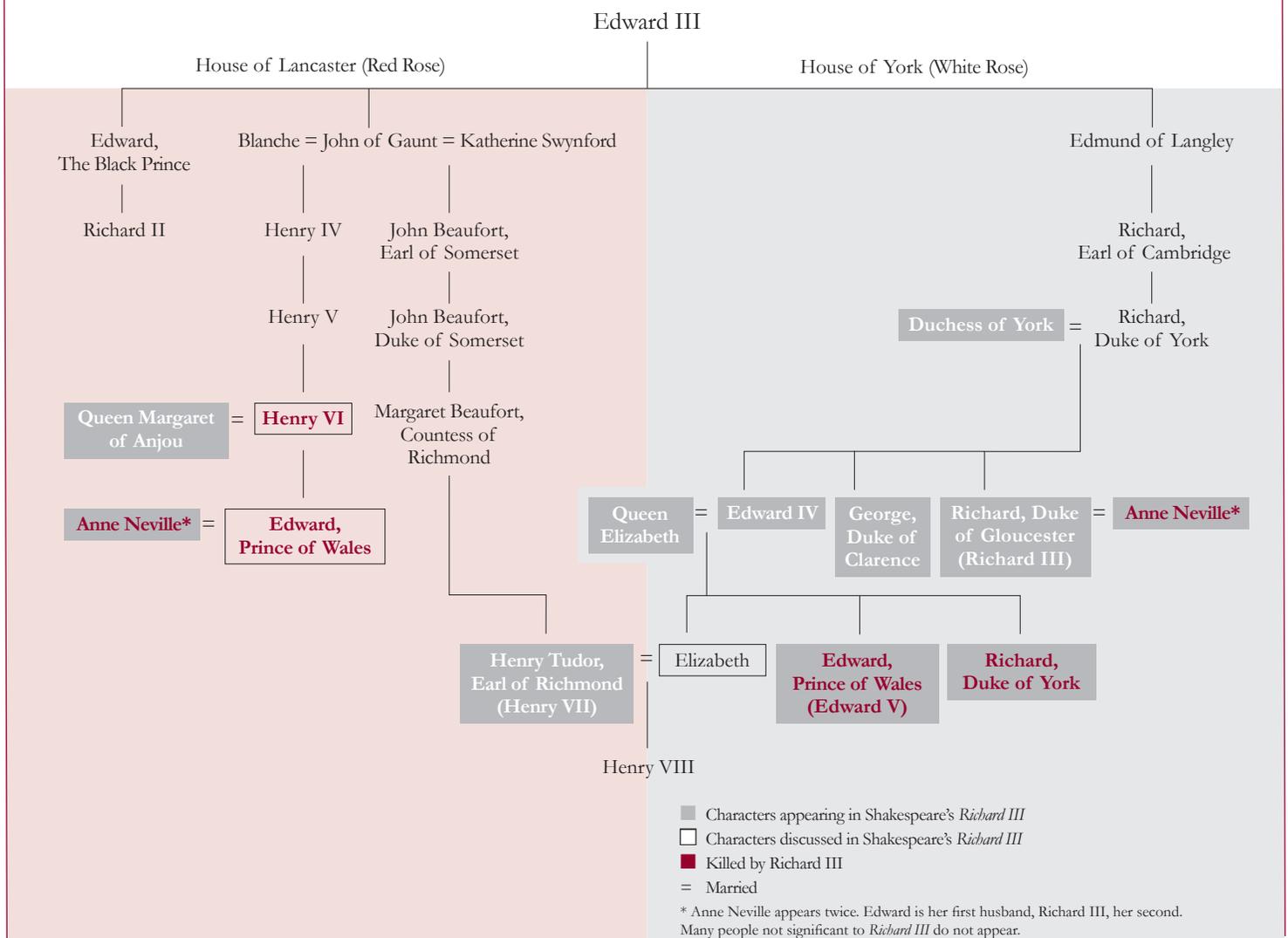
Under King Edward IV's rule, the following 12 years were relatively peaceful and prosperous. During his reign, his two younger brothers led very different careers. **Clarence**, who had already defected once before to the Lancastrian cause, continued to defy and challenge his brother's reign. Eventually, the king arrested Clarence for treason and ordered his execution. Richard spent his brother's reign as an able and respected administrator and general in the north of England, where he lived with his wife, **Anne Neville**, the widow of the Lancastrian Edward, Prince of Wales.

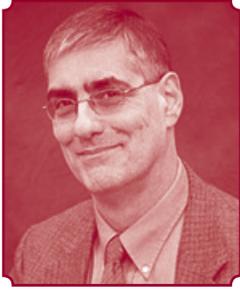
King Edward IV's sudden death at age 40 in 1483, a turning point in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, unleashed a series of power struggles that three months later led to the coronation, not of his son **Edward, Prince of Wales**, but instead, of his younger brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who became Richard III. Richard's coronation followed a long battle with the family of the widowed **Queen Elizabeth**, who fought to keep the prince from the hands of his uncle-protector, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. The events of the next three months—the two sons of Edward IV imprisoned and Richard crowned—are understood to be less the consequence of an

ambitious, premeditated plan than they were of multiple reactions to a chain of events, and fear all around. The murder of the two princes was linked to Richard by the Tudor historians, but no clear evidence of his guilt exists.

Richard's rule lasted two years when he was defeated by the last heir of the Lancastrian line, **Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond**. Richmond, crowned **Henry VII**, was the father of Henry VIII and the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth I. Richmond's marriage to former King Edward IV's daughter, **Elizabeth**, united the two dynastic lines, finally ending the York and Lancaster struggle and the Wars of the Roses.

THE GENEALOGY OF RICHARD III





FROM A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE: A GENTLE STROLL THROUGH THE GENEALOGY OF RICHARD III

David Brailow is Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Franklin College in Franklin, IN. He spent more than 20 years as an English professor and has published articles, book chapters and reviews on contemporary performances of Shakespeare.

Ursurpations, executions, intrigue, murders, and war—no wonder Shakespeare found the 15th century fertile ground for eight of his 10 English chronicle plays. But while the material is ceaselessly dramatic, it is difficult for a contemporary audience to follow the details, partly because the events and the genealogies of the persons involved are so deliciously tangled. Making use of a pared-down genealogical chart, come along for a quick dash through the bustling times of *Richard III*, as Shakespeare presented them.

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Richard III, though written early in Shakespeare's career, represents the culminating events of the chaotic period between 1399 and 1485, ending with the defeat and death of Richard at Bosworth Field and the accession of Henry Tudor (known in the play as Richmond), who became Henry VII. Later, Shakespeare was to return to the early years of the century in four plays which chronicle Richard II's loss of his crown to his usurping cousin Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV) and the passing of that ill-gotten crown to Henry's son Prince Hal (Henry V).

During the so-called "Wars of the Roses," the Yorkists, descended from two sons of Edward III, Edward of Langley, first Duke of York, and Lionel, Duke of Clarence, struggled for power with the Lancastrians, descended from John of Gaunt, another of Edward III's sons (see chart). In 1461, the Yorkists placed Edward IV on the throne. After a succession of revolts and counter revolts—during which Edward IV and Henry VI were

alternately knocked off and restored to the throne—Henry VI was assassinated in 1471, following the death of his son, Edward Prince of Wales.

Shakespeare opens this play somewhere between 1471 (the death of Henry VI) and 1483 (the death of Edward IV). The time between these two events seems only a matter of days in the play. Edward IV is securely on the throne, but the hero-villain, his youngest brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, covets the crown for himself. Unfortunately (mostly for them), four males and one female stand between Richard and glory. First is Edward IV, of course. Second and third are Edward's little sons, Edward the Prince of Wales (later Edward V for a few days) and Richard, 4th Duke of York. Fourth is George, Duke of Clarence, Richard's other surviving older brother. The female is Princess Elizabeth, the oldest of five surviving daughters of Edward IV, though no one seems to think of the daughters as likely successors.

Richard dispatches Clarence through a spot of intrigue and murder-for-hire, and Edward conveniently expires of natural causes. Richard gets himself named Lord Protector, then accuses Edward and his sons of being born out of wedlock and simply takes over the throne. Just to make sure, though, he has his little nephews smothered in the Tower of London. To eliminate the final competitor, Richard proposes to marry Princess Elizabeth, after poisoning his wife, Queen Anne.



LEFT TO RIGHT: QUEEN ANNE (KATHY SANTEN), RICHARD III (BRENDAN CORBALIS), BISHOP ELY (JEFF CHRISTIANSON), THE DUCHESS OF YORK (MARY ANN THEBUS) AND QUEEN ELIZABETH (LISA DODSON) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

photo: Liz Lauren

Thus when Richard III dies at the end of the play, he has succeeded in virtually wiping out both the great lines of descent from Edward III, the house of York and the house of Lancaster (Shakespeare makes Richard the murderer of both Henry VI and his son, Edward the Prince of Wales). Of all likely heirs, only Princess Elizabeth remains. But the candidate who emerges to take the throne is Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond. Henry's mother was descended from John of Gaunt and his second wife, Katherine Swynford, but his father was a minor Welsh nobleman. To cement this extremely shaky claim to the throne, Henry marries Princess Elizabeth, thereby joining together the two rival royal houses of York and Lancaster.

THREE QUEENS AND A DUCHESS

Though juicy female roles are relatively sparse in the history chronicles, *Richard III* has four crucially important royal women. The first is Lady Anne Neville, who appears early in the play. She is the widow of Edward, Prince of Wales, as well as a cousin of the Duchess of York (coming up below). She is first seen following the corpse of her father-in-law, Henry VI, to its grave and cursing Richard, the murderer of both him and her late husband. Not at all put off by her attitude, Richard woos her with at least moderate success, and when we next see poor Anne she is Richard's miserable queen.

Though juicy female roles are relatively sparse in the history chronicles, *Richard III* has four crucially important royal women.

Throughout the play, Richard is haunted by the vengeful figure of Margaret of Anjou, the aged widow of Henry VI. In her prime, Margaret has been a major and often deadly force in English power politics, but now she wanders about the palace like a cursing spirit. In a magnificent scene which gives full expression to the themes of loss and revenge that seem to dominate the Yorkist plays, Margaret joins Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York in a powerful dirge for their families, decimated by war and treachery.

Queen Elizabeth, the second mourner, is Elizabeth Woodville, a woman without previous royal connections, whom Edward IV married apparently for love. She brought with her scores of relatives and friends (including Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, whom Richard later executes), who went to work making themselves rich and powerful, thus incurring the wrath of Edward's younger brothers. This is the root of the family squabbling which Edward IV tries to quell from his deathbed. In the dirge scene, Elizabeth mourns the loss of her husband and her two children, Princes Edward and Richard. Later, Richard persuades her to let him court her daughter, Princess Elizabeth.

The third mourner is Cicely Neville, known in the play only as the Duchess of York. She is the widow of Richard, Duke of York, and the mother of Edward IV, Rutland (the brother killed earlier by the Lancastrians), Clarence, and Richard III. The Duchess mourns the deaths of her husband, first three sons, and two grandsons, while Margaret tartly points out that it was the Duchess's womb that produced Richard, the "hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death."

The litany of names cited during the mourning scene demands from the listener the ability to distinguish among no less than three Richards and an equal number of Edwards, not to mention the odd Henry, Clarence, and Rutland, one of the reasons that no one misses the incantatory effect of these repetitions.

If you become fascinated by the history behind Shakespeare's kings, read Peter Saccio's highly entertaining and mercifully clear *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama*.

SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW...

A "lump of foul deformity," "bottl'd spider," "a poisonous bunch-back'd toad," "elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog" are some of the vivid descriptions that Shakespeare imagined to characterize perhaps the most durable "villain" to have tread the boards of the world's stages. In the course of his dramatic life, Shakespeare's Richard effectively: brutally murders the young Lancastrian Edward, Prince of Wales, at the Battle of Tewkesbury; murders the innocent King Henry VI,

Edward's father, in the Tower of London; convicts his own brother Clarence to a messy death in a barrel of wine; woos and marries Lady Anne, the widow of the Prince of Wales, and subsequently kills her; executes Lord Rivers and Lord Grey, members of Queen Elizabeth's family; beheads Lord Hastings; murders his two young nephews, Edward V and Richard, the Duke of York; and executes the man who helped him rise to power, the Duke of Buckingham. Richard's bloody reign of terror ends when he is slain on Bosworth Field by the Lancastrian Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who leads an army against Richard and would at least seem to promise a revitalized monarchy.

Where did Shakespeare come up with such a perfectly monstrous, yet seductive and complex character? Scholars have long investigated and analyzed Shakespeare's play against some of the most influential scholarship of the period. Written ca.1591, *Richard III's* literary DNA can be traced to the works of Sir Thomas More. More grew up in the household of John Morton, Bishop of Ely—a character in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and his opponent. Best known for his *Utopia* (1516)—a Latin account of an ideal world, from whose name we derive our word “utopia”—More wrote the *History of King Richard the Thirde*, published in English in 1543. More's portrait of the dark, vengeful Richard is said to have influenced the creation of Shakespeare's villain king:

Richard... was... little of stature, ill featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured of visage... He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birthe ever forward. It is for truth reported... that he came into the world with the feet forward... [and] not untoothed... He was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not besitating to kiss whom he thought to kill, pitiless and cruel... Friend and foe were to him indifferent; where his advantage grew, he spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose.

More's account of history, however, has generated considerable controversy among a number of historians and scholars who believe Richard III was an able and loyal leader. According to academics committed to salvaging Richard's tarnished reputation, More's history is full of inconsistencies. They contend that the Tudor dynasty established by Henry VII (Queen Elizabeth's Tudor



photo: Liz Lauren

LEFT TO RIGHT: QUEEN ANNE (KATHY SANTEN), QUEEN ELIZABETH (LISA DODSON) AND THE DUCHESS OF YORK (MARY ANN THEBUS) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

grandfather) in his defeat of Richard III had a shaky claim as the legitimate heir to the crown. It is their contention that Henry VII was paranoid about the possibility of a revolt and, to justify his claim to the throne, he and the rest of the Tudor clan chose to portray Richard as a monster. To this end, Henry VII commissioned an Italian historian, Polydore Vergil, to write a Tudor version of past events. Richard's supporters point out that “historians” were often free to rearrange and interpret the facts as one powerful person—like a king of England—might wish to read them. In the 1940s, Shakespearean scholar E.M.W. Tillyard coined the term “Tudor Myth” to describe the Tudor interpretative “rearrangement” of fifteenth-century English history.

More's account of history has generated considerable controversy among a number of historians and scholars who believe Richard III was an able and loyal leader.

Even the truth of Richard's deformity is called into question by the memory of an aging countess who, during the reign of Henry VII, recalled that she had danced with the young Richard of Gloucester, “the handsomest man in the room with the exception of his brother Edward.” The only eyewitness account of Richard's reign still known to

survive was written in 1483 by an Italian named Mancini, who describes Richard as “so renowned in war that whenever anything difficult and dangerous had to be done on behalf of the kingdom, it would be entrusted to his advice and leadership. In these ways, Richard obtained the goodwill of the people.” Mancini also corroborates the story of Clarence’s drowning in a barrel of wine, as well as of the young princes’ disappearance prior to Richard’s coronation.

But if his own sources were in fact one-sided, did Shakespeare intentionally write a “libelous” play? Or, as some scholars contend, was he writing in the tradition that More and his contemporaries had already established? The dramatist, these scholars contend, was merely working from the information and scholarship available to him. Aside from More’s text, Shakespeare also drew from Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587) and Edward Hall’s *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1550). These chronicles, too, are similar in their portrayal of Richard III—their authors, too, had common sources to draw upon.

The character of Richard is a cleverer and more complex version of a figure often featured in medieval morality plays...

Shakespeare was also influenced by a number of other literary works, including the medieval morality plays, as well as the dramatic conventions prevalent on the Elizabethan stage. The character of Richard is a cleverer and more complex version of a figure often featured in medieval morality plays—the Vice. An evil villain, the traditional Vice used direct address to make the audience party to his tricks and ploys. Over-confident, self-admiring and cheeky, it is the style of his villainy that sets the Vice apart. Richard’s life was also the subject of poems, various ballads, and an early Renaissance play written in classical Latin. Critics have noted that Shakespeare probably read the popular anthology *Mirror of Magistrates* (1559); set in verse, this book consists of moral tales, many of which are associated with Richard III.

Other Elizabethan playwrights wrote history plays, and it is likely that many drew from the same sources. Shakespeare’s plays have endured, however, neither because they succeeded in exploiting current interest, nor because they functioned cleverly under the censorious hand of Tudor propaganda. In writing *Richard III*, or any history play for that matter, Shakespeare approached his sources not as a spokesperson of governmental status quo, but as a creative artist who sought to explore the intricacies of human nature, and not expound upon its doctrines.

SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS

Prince Edward: *Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?*

Buckingham: *He did, my gracious lord, begin that place, / Which, since, succeeding ages have re-edified.*

Prince Edward: *Is it upon record, or else reported / Successively from age to age, he built it?*

Buckingham: *Upon record, my gracious lord.*

Prince Edward: *But say, my lord, it were not registered, / Methinks the truth should live from age to age, / As 'twere retailed to all posterity, / Even to the general all-ending day.* (Act 3, Scene 1)

Of the 38 plays Shakespeare penned over a quarter of a century, 10 were categorized as history plays. The majority of his work in this genre is divided into two categories. The so-called “minor tetralogy” consists of *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3* and *Richard III*, written sometime between 1589 and 1594. It was followed by the “major tetralogy” that includes *Richard II, Henry IV 1 and 2, and Henry V*, written between 1595 and 1599. The other two, lesser-known histories in Shakespeare’s canon are *King John* and *Henry VIII*. Together, these plays span English history from 1398 to 1485.

With the first set of four plays that he wrote, Shakespeare explored the disorder and chaos of society in the throes of a civil war. This minor tetralogy begins with the death of King Henry V in 1422 and ends with the defeat of Richard III and the crowning of Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth’s grandfather. In the major tetralogy (which,

photo: Liz Lauren



GHOSTS OF THE DUKE OF YORK (GRADY HUTT, *LEFT*) AND THE PRINCE OF WALES (TIM FERRIN, *RIGHT*) HAUNT RICHARD III (BRENDAN CORBALIS, *BELOW*) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

though written later, chronicled an earlier period), Shakespeare looked again to history to examine causes and changes of a nation in the middle of shifting sensibilities as it moved traumatically from medieval to modern. The second tetralogy follows the dethroning and murder of Richard II, the usurpation and subsequent death of King Henry IV, and the invasion and defeat of France by the Henry IV's son, Henry V (whose death begins the first tetralogy).

Although strongly influenced by historical accounts of past events, Shakespeare's plays are often less historical and more political, even tragic, in nature. He was keen on exploring the balance and nature of power within the monarchy. Consequently, he became less interested in writing plays that conveyed "historical fact" and took artistic license in order to delve into the complex, highly progressive moral and psychological implications of kingly power and virtues. It was as if he were exploring the various vices and virtues that make up the quintessential monarch. But Shakespeare did not focus solely on the nature of power from a kingly perspective. He also managed to create plays that related to the common people, mirroring Elizabethan society's appetite for history, its sense of nationalism, and its need for moral terra firma to anchor itself within the fragile political environment of the time.

As a leading Protestant country, England found itself perpetually at odds with the Catholic powers of Europe, France and Spain. Spain especially posed a dangerous threat to the State, and England felt politically vulnerable

until its history-changing defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, an event inspiring newfound patriotism and self-confidence throughout England that the country was no longer chained to a European stronghold. Its European "liberation" marked a shift in English attitudes regarding self-determination and independence. Consequently, many of the history plays celebrate England's greatness—at the expense of its rivals. For the English, it was fair game to poke fun at French morals, manners and military prowess, and the French are often depicted as untrustworthy, weak or unstable.

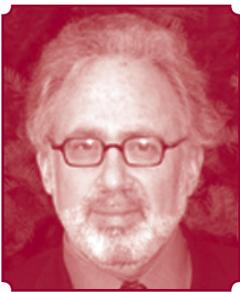
The Wars of the Roses, the underlying political tension in eight of Shakespeare's English history plays, was as far removed from the English citizens during Shakespeare's time as America's own Civil War is from us. With the printing press still a relatively new invention, and newspapers still an invention of the unimagined future, once world events passed in the late sixteenth century they might well be forgotten—unless they had been turned into legends, handed down mainly through oral tradition. For the majority of the illiterate English populace, plays (among them Shakespeare's) provided their first introduction to a history that had not been piecemealed together through oral communication. Therefore, when Shakespeare wrote his series of history plays, the public responded with enthusiastic interest.

Although strongly influenced by historical accounts of past events, Shakespeare's plays are often less historical and more political, even tragic, in nature.

But even an invigorated England could not quell the growing fear and uncertainty surrounding the last years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The question on people's minds was what would happen to England when their queen died? A series of plots to assassinate Elizabeth, combined with the knowledge that there was no obvious heir to the throne, sent nervous tremors throughout the country. Would the power struggle reignite a civil strife between

a new set of contenders like Richard III and Henry VI, or would the country unite as it did behind Henry V and Henry VII?

Using history as a foundation, Shakespeare built characters and events that explored the complexity of human nature. He was not tied to historical accuracy in the same way we expect a historian to be. He opted to show a history in process—sometimes ironic, sometimes confusing and often unfair. As Antony Hammond notes in his 1981 introduction to *Richard III*: “It is true that he invents more villainies for Richard than [Thomas] More (or anyone else), but this is compatible with this view of history—that the fact is less important as such than the moral truth, the detail less important than the general principle...” Shakespeare’s ability to craft stories of human emotion, motivation and vulnerability out of the events of the historical past has allowed his plays to be reinterpreted and enjoyed to this day.



FROM A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE: **SOLUS**

Stuart Sherman, Associate Professor of English and Assistant Chair of the Department at Fordham University, is a specialist in eighteenth-century literature.

“Enter Richard, *Duke of Gloucester, solus*”

Solus is Latin for alone, and in this opening stage direction, Shakespeare sets the tone for his whole play.

Richard’s first soliloquy is a song of his own solitude. The civil wars in which he fought ferociously are over; with his eldest brother now securely on the throne, his comrades have turned away from combat toward amorous pursuits for which he, misshapen since birth (“sent before my time/Into this breathing world scarce half made up”), deems himself unfit:

*Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on my own deformity.*

Which is what he’s doing now: singing variations on the theme of his own ugliness, with only his shadow as companion.

Or so he claims. But he knows, and we know, that his solitude is actually a little more complicated than that—and that we’re the complication. After all, we’re here too; he’s telling all this to us. And so begins a strangely orchestrated intimacy.

Richard’s soullessness proves peculiarly compelling; it fosters a self-certainty that most of us are likely to lack.

Shakespeare’s audience knew Richard as an overweeningly ambitious killer. They had already watched him (in the history cycle’s previous play) clinch his clan’s victory in the civil wars by killing both the rival king, Henry VI, and his heir the Prince of Wales. And they could foresee, from oft-told legend and widely read history, that en route to securing the kingship for himself, Richard would soon be slaughtering one brother, two nephews, his own wife, several onetime allies, and a cluster of meddling in-laws.

Shakespeare’s great achievement (some would say his first great achievement, the one that made him Shakespeare) is to make the killing sound like fun, to draw us, at least at the outset, into amused, amoral collusion with the killer. By soliloquy’s end, as Richard has begun to sketch his homicidal plans wittily, gleefully, and without a shred of conscience, it becomes hard to resist his implicit invitation to a tacit criminal alliance.

In that opening stage direction, then, Shakespeare may have savored a latent trans-linguistic pun: *solus/soulless*. For Richard’s soullessness proves peculiarly compelling; it fosters a self-certainty that most of us are likely to lack. If, as Hamlet claims, “conscience does make cowards of us all,” Richard appears to resolve the problem by doing away with conscience altogether. He trades it in for comedy, and by making us laugh (with him, at his victims) he gives us a break from the burden of our consciences as well. The tradeoff works, and Richard knows it. For a long while, all his asides and soliloquies will breathe this same breezy confidence. He is as sure of us as he is of his own shadow.

Richard's victims, mortals more ordinary, are also more complicated. They have souls, however troubled, and consciences, however corrupted, and they are hobbled by them. They make empty promises, they fear strong curses, they have bad dreams (one of which, retold in detail by the dreamer just minutes before his murder, is perhaps the first harrowingly realistic nightmare in English literature). Even some of Richard's hired killers fall prey to anticipatory remorse, recoiling from the commands he has so blithely given.

Richard alone remains apparently immune, ramping up his antic ingenuity so adroitly that, though we may pause for a moment to pity his victims, we willingly rejoin him in his relentlessly beguiling pursuit of the throne he seeks, "that golden time I look for."

And then he finds it. Shakespeare makes Richard's coronation the play's pivot point. The crown changes its new wearer, and our response to him. Richard is still murderous, still energetically intent upon securing his own power. But the murders, this time of children, appall even his hardened henchmen, and the energy curdles into something closer to incompetence: we watch him rage, fumble, lose control. When even Richard's most loyal ally, the one he's once deemed his "other self," decides to desert him, we begin to draw back, too. Having tracked with shadow-like adherence the ascent of the Duke of Gloucester, we will watch with a more distant fascination the disintegration of Richard III.

III: The number Richard has killed to attain proves, in the end, uncannily expressive. Originally a series of *ones* fused into a sturdy symmetry, it reads in English as a sequence of I's: I and I and I again, as though to encapsulate Richard's audacious conviction that I is all in all, and all he needs if he's to thrive ("I am myself alone" he declared proudly in this play's predecessor). Soon after he's crowned king, the numeral shifts meaning. As he gnaws on his own anxieties and the once witty soliloquies dwindle down to fretful mutterings, the I's that form his lifelong credo and his new-won title begin to look like prison bars.

And finally, like the gates of hell itself. Near play's end, Shakespeare lets us witness Richard's nightmare, wherein the ghosts of all his victims converge to pronounce his doom, and he wakes into a last soliloquy that reads like a dark inversion of the first.

*What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by;
Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I ...
O no, alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain—yet I lie, I am not!*

Here as before Richard is trying to cheer himself onward, but this time Shakespeare makes his speech a map of disintegration. In that last line, the three *I*'s come asunder, each depicting a different Richard (villain, liar, innocent). Identities are now multiple and conflicting. As if to gauge the change, Shakespeare reworks key words from his play's first page:

*shadows tonight
Have struck ... terror to the soul of Richard ...*

His shadow, at first singular and insistently solitary, has now shattered into fragments, and awakened him from inveterate self-delusion. His true terror is the discovery that he has a soul, and that it will be the ruin of him.

For Richard, *solus*, there is no solace. For us there's one. Drawn hypnotically into his shadow, we have also managed to escape it, alive and wide-eyed, at the end of one extraordinary play.



photo: Liz Lauren

BRACKENBERRY (RODERICK PEEPLES) AND DUKE OF CLARENCE (KEVIN GUDAHL) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1600s



Malicious credulitie rather embraceth the partiall writings of indiscreet chroniclers, and witty Play-Makers, then [Richard III's] laws and actions, the most innocent and impartiall witnesses... Yet neither can his blood redeem him from injurious tongues, nor the reproch offered his body be thought cruell enough, but that we must stil make him more cruelly infamous in Pamphlets and Plays. —Sir William Cornwallis, 1600

As Honour is always attended on by Envy, so hath this worthy Princes fame been blasted by malicious traducers, who like “Shakespear” in his Play of him, render him dreadfully black in his actions, a monster of nature, rather [than] a man of admirable parts. —William Winstanley, 1660

1700s



“Richard” as he is here drawn is not a fit Character for the Stage, being shocking in all he does; and we think (notwithstanding the huddling so much time into two hours) that Providence is too slow and too mild in his Punishment... “Richard” is a calm Villain; and does his Murders deliberately, wading through a Sea of his nearest Relations blood to the Crown. —Charles Gildon, 1710

If Shakespear is in any Instance to be blamed for keeping too close to the Historian, it is for dignifying the last Moments of this bloody Tyrant with such shining Proofs of Fortitude and Valour as, notwithstanding the Detestation we conceived at his cruelties, must force from us an involuntary Applause... Shakespear improves this... which has indeed this improper Effect, that our hatred of the Tyrant is wholly lost in our Admiration of the Heroe. —Charlotte Lennox, 1754

[This play] is one of the most celebrated of our authour's performances; yet I know not whether it has not happened to him as to others, to be praised most when praise is not most deserved. That this play has scenes noble in themselves, and very well contrived to strike in the exhibition, cannot be denied. But some parts are trifling, others shocking, and some improbable. —Samuel Johnson, 1765

Shakespeare...in Richard the Third particularly makes so needless a devil of the crook'd-back monster (since we must subscribe to the general opinion of Richard's deformity) that he actually raises our ridicule, where he obviously wishes to excite the abhorrence of his auditors... What man of common sense, for instance, would ask the woman he passionately loved, when upbraiding him with the murder of her father, whether he was not kind in sending him to heaven? What man of common sense would urge as meritorious to a lady of virtue his having killed her husband, and publicly solicit her hand as a reward for so “laudable” an action?

—George Steevens, 1772

Such is the nature of man, that the slightest alarm, arising from within, discomfits him more than the greatest dangers presenting themselves from without. Body may be overcome by body, but the mind only can conquer itself. —Elizabeth Griffith, 1775

1800s



Shakespear has not made Richard so black a Monster as is supposed. Wherever he is monstrous, it was to conform to vulgar opinion. But he is generally a Man. Read his most exquisite address to the Widowed Queen to court her daughter for him—the topics of maternal feeling, of a deep knowledge of the heart, are such as no monster could have supplied. Richard must have felt before he could feign so well; tho' ambition choked the good seed. —Charles Lamb, 1801

The inferiority of his person made the hero seek consolation and compensation in the superiority of his intellect; he thus endeavoured to counterbalance his deficiency. —Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1811

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1800s
CONTINUED



The play itself is undoubtedly a very powerful effusion of Shakespear's genius. The ground-work of the character of Richard—that mixture of intellectual vigour with moral depravity, in which Shakespear delighted to shew his strength—gave full scope as well as temptation to the exercise of his imagination.

—William Hazlitt, 1817

This is the meaning of Richard's words, 'I am myself alone,' the motto of the perfect tyrant, and it at the same time expresses his full, clear consciousness of his own nature. Richard is quite aware that he is a tyrant, he knows it, and wills it; this was required by Shakespeare's view of life, which is far removed from the thought that man is a mere instrument in the hand of a higher power.

—Hermann Ulrici, 1846

If a portion of the bitterness and soured rage that lies in Richard's nature was rooted in this self-contempt of his outward appearance, [then] his contempt of men on the other hand is grounded on the liberal gifts which nature has bestowed on his mind, and on the self-reliance which a comparison with the men around him inspired.

—G.G. Gervinus, 1849-50

Richard does not serve two masters... He has fierce joy, and he is an intense believer—in the creed of hell. And therefore he is strong. He inverts the moral order of things, and tries to live in this inverted system. He does not succeed; he dashes himself to pieces against the laws of the world which he has outraged. Yet we cannot refrain from yielding a certain tribute of admiration to the malefactor, who ventures on the daring experiment of choosing evil for his good.

—Edward Dowden, 1875

Richard is quite aware that he is a tyrant, he knows it, and wills it; this was required by Shakespeare's view of life, which is far removed from the thought that man is a mere instrument in the hand of a higher power.

What form and colour are to the painter, what rhythm and imagery are to the poet, that crime is to Richard: it is the medium in which his soul frames its conceptions of the beautiful.

—Richard G. Moulton, 1885

Richard is the humorist of Inferno, a human devil jesting with the moral principle of the Universe. The question which he unconsciously proposes to himself, is: Am I of the World's Order supreme? A demonic subtlety of intellect and a demonic strength of will are given to him, and he makes the trial.

—Denton J. Snider, ca. 1890

The tone of the play of Richard III is in the deepest harmony with the character of its one leading personage. Retribution is its beginning, middle, and end—the ominous sound uttered by all living shapes here, from the highest to the lowest. An over-mastering power hovers in the air above and swoops down upon the guilty world, requiting the wicked deed often with immediate destruction.

—Denton J. Snider, ca. 1890

[Shakespeare's Richard III] has abundant devilry, humor, and character, presented with luxuriant energy of diction in the simplest form of blank verse... Richard is the prince of Punches: he delights Man by provoking God, and dies unrepentant and game to the last.

—George Bernard Shaw, 1896

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1900s



Richard is an enormously magnified representation of something we can all discover in ourselves. We all think we have reason to reproach nature and our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages; we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love. Why did not nature give us the golden curls of Balder or the strength of Siegfried, or the lofty brow of genius or the noble profile of aristocracy? Why were we born in a middle-class dwelling instead of a royal palace? We could as well carry off beauty and distinction as any of those whom now we cannot but envy.
—Sigmund Freud, 1915

Richard is a brilliant villain, and he is the more brilliant because he is seen and heard against a wall of stone music made by the many other persons in the play whose constant opposition to him is massed and loud.
—Mark Van Doren, 1939

[Richard III] is a strange combination of villain and comedian, a jesting and intellectually adroit rogue. The effect is a peculiarly complex one; if we try to approach Richard as a realistic character portrayed, we shall miss completely the intention of Shakespeare. Richard is a study in disguises, a set of variations on the theme of deception.
—Sidney Thomas, 1943

Whereas the sins of other men had merely bred more sins, Richard's are so vast that they are absorptive, not contagious. He is the great ulcer of the body politic into which all its impurity is drained and against which all the members of the body politic are united.
—E.M.W. Tillyard, 1944

Richard is an enormously magnified representation of something we can all discover in ourselves. We all think we have reason to reproach nature and our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages.

We need not choose between Richard the psychological study in compensation for physical disability and Richard the embodiment of sheer demonic will, for he is both... He ranges from credibly motivated villain to a symbol, psychologically absurd however useful dramatically, of the diabolic.
—E.M.W. Tillyard, 1944

Richard is [Shakespeare's] first great tragic figure; but Richard's universe is not universally tragic... The characterisation of Richard is psychologically simple; he is an incarnate idea, an ideal rather than an individual; humanly he is only an individual in the sense that he is unique.
—H.B. Charlton, 1946-47

On the face of it [Richard] is the demon Prince, the cacodemon born of bell, the misshapen toad, etc. (all things ugly and ill). But through his prowess as actor and his embodiment of the comic Vice and impish-to-fiendish humour, he offers the false as more attractive than the true and the ugly and evil as admirable and amusing.
—A.P. Rossiter, 1953

Richard, then, is a fox among foxes. He is wittier than the others and more successful. But his victories can be attributed not so much to the fact that he is more villainous than the rest, as to the fact that he is more consistently and self-admittedly villainous.
—Murray Krieger, 1959

Richard had been making history. The whole world was for him a piece of clay, shaped by someone else. In the Histories I have always admired Shakespeare's perception of the moment when history pushes the hitherto all-powerful prince into a blind alley; the moment when he who has been making history, or thinks he has been making it, becomes more than its object. The moment when the Grand Mechanism turns out to be stronger than the man who has put it in motion.
—Jan Kott, 1961

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1900S CONTINUED



But do not suppose I am saying that the play is a 'debunking of Tudor myth,' or that Shakespeare is disproving it. He is not 'proving' anything... This historic myth offered absolutes, certainties. Shakespeare in the Histories always leaves us with relatives, ambiguities, irony, a process thoroughly dialectical. —A.P. Rossiter, 1961

In Richard III, although the various conventions are not yet welded into a unity, the connexion between linguistic vitality and energy of moral insight is already apparent. It is not only that Richard's lively idiom "cuts through the muffled hypocrisies of language." Even in the elaborately stylized scenes Shakespeare is aiming at something more subtle than a self-conscious display of rhetorical skill: these too can precipitate a moment of lucid truth about human nature; as when... Queen Elizabeth, engaged in a formal rhetorical duel with Richard (IV.iv.376-80), shows him, step by step, that there is nothing he can swear by and be believed—neither honor, nor self, nor religion. —L.C. Knights, 1962

Richard has elements of the picaresque hero, and this is a notable alteration of the mere villain. Ordinarily the picaresque hero is a sterilized criminal; he turns cleverness, not evil, against his victims. He must outwit, not outrage. By definition, the picaresque hero is all operative mind; he simply does not have the ordinary component of human feeling... Now, Richard is pitiless but not without feeling; he derives his power from profound surges of envy and hatred. This is not picaresque; it is criminality unsterilized... If Shakespeare does not actually shock by giving a con man a dagger, he plays a hard game by giving a murderer the air of a con man. To the melodrama of pure villainy he has added some ambitious complications. —Robert B. Heilman, 1964

The tragic conflict, what lifts the play above melodrama or the mere narrative of a well-merited fall, is not offered within the characters of Richard, but in the character of the play itself, in the conflict of dramatic modes that it presents. And in this we may see the morally and physically deformed Richard as an image of the tragic enfeeblement of man. —Nicholas Brooke, 1965

There are no gods in Shakespeare. There are only kings, every one of whom is an executioner, and a victim, in turn. There are also living, frightened people. They can only gaze upon the grand staircase of history... Shakespearean tragedy, unlike ancient tragedies, is not a drama of moral attitudes in the face of immortal gods; there is no fate which decides the hero's destiny. The greatness of Shakespeare's realism consists in his awareness of the extent to which people are involved in history. —Jan Kott, 1965

There are no good and bad kings; there are only kings on different steps of the same stairs. The names of the kings may change, but it is always a Henry who pushed a Richard down, or the other way round. —Jan Kott, 1965

Here the King is, in the first half of the tragedy, the mastermind of the Grand Mechanism...the Machiavellian Prince. But Shakespeare is wiser than the author of The Prince. As he walks up the grand stairs, Richard becomes smaller and smaller. It is as if the Grand Mechanism was absorbing him. Gradually he becomes just one of its cogs. He has ceased to be the executioner; he is now a victim, caught in the wheels. —Jan Kott, 1965

Richard is a very special kind of monster, the monster as humorist. To him the code of traditional morality and the bonds of social affection are not a hated enemy but an amusing tool. He uses them to play with other people's emotions both to attain his secret ends and out of sheer virtuosity. If he were an embittered outcast, he would never have the detachment to be such a consummate hypocrite. Hatred is a powerful form of evil, but Richard goes beyond hatred to the malevolence of the brilliant man, contempt. —Robert B. Pierce, 1971

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1900S CONTINUED



[Shakespeare] places as great a value on the sanctity of personal relations in the History Plays as in the tragedies, because he intuits that order depends, not on concepts of hierarchy and degree, but on the fabric of personal and social relationships which is woven by ties of marriage, kinsship, and friendship, by communal interests, and ideals of loyalty and trust. Accordingly, he sees the archenemies of political order, not as subversive ideologists, but as individualists who cast off all bonds of blood or affection—who hunger for power because they cannot love. Chaos comes in the History Plays as in the tragedies, not when doctrines of obedience are questioned, but when the most intimate human ties disintegrate: when brother turns on brother, when a son becomes his father’s enemy.

—Paul Ornstein, 1972

Though the Richard we meet at the beginning of the play is, in a very real sense, psychologically whole, we find that he has two personalities. The public Richard alters somewhat the shape of his image from situation to situation, but all of his “on-stage” shadows have the same moral essence. . . The private Richard may well be described in his own terms as Iniquity, the personification of selfish demonic energy or appetite. Since Richard uses his public or puppet character as a means of satisfying his desires, we may say that his is a deliberately split personality. And, as everybody would agree, it is largely by means of this divided personality that he presents himself to us as a most engaging fellow.

—William B. Toole, 1974

An absolute rejection of the irrational is a fatal misjudgment in the world of Richard III. . . As each spirit pauses, he/she speaks to Richard like a voice of consciousness within the soul. . . Consciousness is the one enemy that he can neither trick nor silence. . . From the controller of his dreams, he has become the controlled, the victim of his own horrible imaginings.

—Marjorie Garber, 1974

Richard, however, like Faustus, bears no answer from his Savior, but turns inward to find only himself present. Shakespeare makes the experience dramatically more powerful by portraying Richard’s profound sense of aloneness. . . The loss of all companionship is perhaps the strongest foreshadowing of hell. The ghosts have come and gone, the demons have disappeared, and Richard is left with himself: “Is there a murderer here (V.iii.215)?”

—Bettie Anne Doebler, 1974

Richard’s confidence in the efficacy of acting as a mode of action certainly stands at the opposite pole from Hamlet’s metaphysical agonies, but it, too, is the product of something much deeper than mere connoisseurship. . . Richard. . . sets out, rather, to “create” himself. His methods are those of the theater. . . it is through action that we realize what we are; it is through acting that we make real what we are not.

—Michael Neill, 1975

As spectator one admires and enjoys Richard rather than loathes him. This happens because of the interest, vitality, and attractiveness he requires in contrast to the drab background of figures—especially his female victims—each of whom relentlessly and unimaginatively carries out the dictates of a single conventional role. . . For what the spectator witnesses in the first three acts of the play is not the criminal activity of an evil monster but—because of the constant emphasis on Richard’s play-acting—a series of brilliant performances by a charming entertainer at the peak of his career.

—Thomas F. Van Laan, 1978

Richard’s “need” to debase birth imagery implies that women (those capable of giving birth) have a power which finally cannot be devalued or eliminated; further, his repeated attempts, on a larger level, to rob women of their identity as mothers, wives, or queens, are doomed to frustration in that he cannot rob women of their identity as creative, regenerative human beings.

—Madonne M. Miner, 1980

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1900s
CONTINUED



Shakespeare began to write these plays with a coherent set of received values in his mind. Nevertheless, he began at some point to see where such values inevitably led, and places them, these values he shares to some degree, in his villain. One of Richard's defining characteristics is misogyny (so too, Iago). Shakespeare did not unthinkingly adopt the ideas of his culture: he saw something profoundly lethal about misogyny, and tried to find another way to deal with the traditional arrangement of morals implicit in the gender principles. —Marilyn French, 1981

Richard is a great role... [He] can create himself by mocking down the world. That will be his plot, the action through which he will become a character. He is not born into this plot, this role; he creates them. He creates "history" by showing how lifeless and manipulable, how insubstantial it is in the hands of a mocking artist.

—John W. Blanpied, 1983

Shakespeare's play departs so drastically from history that [biographies of all the characters for the cast are] of curiosity value rather than of any real use.

—Antony Sher, who played Richard III, 1985

One of the things I wanted to avoid with Richard was falling into the trap of constantly presenting a Machiavel who knew exactly what he was going to do ten steps ahead, a man of moustache-twirling knowingness and unrelieved cleverness.

Richard's fascination with self leads to the narcissism characteristic of shamelessness: it is the shadow of himself, however, that interests him, for he was not "made to court an amorous looking-glass." Richard cannot look directly upon the full physical, moral and emotional deformity that constitutes himself. His shamelessness and narcissistic absorption with his shadow thus attest to a self-hate that Elizabeth recognizes as his "interior hatred."

—Nancy A. Cluck, 1985

As games may do in life when one of the players breaks the social compact on which playfulness depends, the games Richard plays move beyond play to actual hurting. A player who keeps doing this is soon likely to be isolated—unless the whole gang joins in and makes the game into hurting, as with street gangs. Richard has been brought up in such a gang, the house of York in the contention of the two noble houses of York and Lancaster.

—C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, 1986

I began to study the piece and became more and more aware of what part it was. It began to grow inside me. I had to find the character, and slowly he began to come to me... I never believed that the real paintings of him were anything like him; or, if I did, I wasn't going to admit it. Nothing was going to stop me putting that make-up on. I wanted to look like the most evil thing there was. [The audience] must be won over by his wit, his brilliantly wry sense of humor and his veneer of smiling sophistication. —Laurence Olivier, who played Richard III, 1986

Richard is very much of the new capitalist world. He uses the language of business and displays its attitudes throughout.

—Paul N. Siegel, 1986

One of the things I wanted to avoid with Richard was falling into the trap of constantly presenting a Machiavel who knew exactly what he was going to do ten steps ahead, a man of moustache-twirling knowingness and unrelieved cleverness. I wanted his intelligence, and his Machiavellian quality, to be earned... People usually come to Shakespeare with preconceptions. What is interesting in the theater is to send them home saying 'I don't know whether I think that any more.'

—Anton Lesser, who played Richard III, 1988

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

1900s
CONTINUED



Yet what distinguishes Richard from his predecessors is his pleasure in this black image. Rather than boasting of his own bright splendor in Herodic fashion, he privately glories in his monstrosity. As much as he publicly dons the mask of the saint, Richard privately adopts rather than rejects his accusers' rhetoric to construct his own version of sovereignty.
—Rebecca W. Bushnell, 1990

Richard III is, after all, a play in which the wounds of the murdered bleed again in the presence of the murderer; the stabbing of a horse is a compelling omen, curses are efficacious, dreams possess explanatory value, ghosts return to influence and govern temporal events, and prophecies are fulfilled not in vague and general terms but in specific detail.
—E. Pearlman, 1992

The language Richard uses to describe the facets of war—bruised arms, dreadful marches, wrinkled fronts—metonymically links his body to Grim-visag'd War. He, too, has bruised arms, a dreadful march; he, too, will smooth his wrinkled front as he manipulates others. For Richard, the absence of an opportunity openly to exercise violent aggression forces him into a position of self-regard, in which he must behold his own image and establish a relationship to his "person."
—Linda Charnes, 1993

If this is the "truth" toward which the records of history point, it is by no means the truth of Shakespeare's play. And as we return to the play, we should end where we began—with the tragedy of Richard III, a title that never varied in the early editions.
—Milla C. Riggio, 1994

The changes in fortune which the men see as the successive triumphs and failure of coats of arms and great houses, the women experience (and articulate) as personal losses, private emotional catastrophes.

[Elizabeth] is drawn into Margaret's world, and the Duchess of York and Anne are part of it, too. It is a ritualistic, primitive, incantatory world, depending upon an absolute belief in the power of the curse, the very opposite of political power and deriving from its loss, drawing its strength from grief. Only the women have direct access to this intuitive power; the men make contact with it only subconsciously, through the series of dreams that punctuates the play. This primitive power takes control of the play as soon as Richard sits on the throne.

—Steven Pimlott, director of the RSC's production, 1995

It is [the women] who bring home the horror behind the succession struggles of the history books, by consistently presenting the action to the audience as domestic tragedy... The changes in fortune which the men see as the successive triumphs and failure of coats of arms and great houses, the women experience (and articulate) as personal losses, private emotional catastrophes. So, while the men of the nobility conspire to cause each other's deaths, and plot the substitution of one royal line for another, the women wait. Deprived themselves of the ability to act, they stand by, majestically grieving, and count the cost of civil war in human terms.

—Lisa Jardine, 1995

Interestingly, and consistent with his treatment of women elsewhere, Richard does not pursue the witchcraft charges against Elizabeth and Jane Shore. Whereas he seeks to control, humiliate, and punish women, he seldom actually has them killed. His violence is directed instead at the male rivals they have preferred over him.

—Deborah Willis, 1995

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

2000s



Like the other women in Richard III, Elizabeth serves as a kind of ventriloquist's dummy. She gives forceful and eloquent voice to Richard's crimes, but her own motives can remain ambiguous because they are finally irrelevant to the outcome of the plot. What is important is that Richmond marries her daughter; whether or when the queen gives her consent is of so little consequence that it is never clearly specified in Shakespeare's script.

—Phyllis Rackin, 1996

Villainy reveals through performance the true, core content of every person, thereby turning villains like Richard into messengers of truth. This challenges the Elizabethan belief in physical appearance as an outward reflection of internal constitution. Such a belief is true only concerning ugliness. Beauty reflects nothing. It simply lies.

—Tzachi Zamir, 1998

In the course of the play, [Richard's] body alternately does and does not give him away. At times his victims seem to know what he is, and at other times they do not... [By the end of Lady Anne's wooing scene when] she begins to waver, she seems to realize that he is distorting her perceptions of him... She dimly perceives, even as she succumbs to him, that she cannot see his true intentions figured in his body but instead must see into his interior... She exits both charmed and temporarily free of the revulsion toward Richard that she formerly felt. For the moment, at least, his body no longer disgusts her; nor does it represent for her a signal of his villainy.

—Michael Torrey, 2000

Not only does Richard compare himself to the best orators and deceivers known to history, he believes without a doubt that he will outperform them... Richard sees himself as an actor in a play larger than life, a play in which he not only takes the lead, but takes the lead better than anyone else.

—Christopher Andrews, 2000

In this rich interplay of meanings of the term "die," we see that Richard makes Anne responsible for his "dying," no matter what... In this kind of semantic flux, perhaps we can see that Anne feels she really has no choices at all, for all the choices seem to make her equally responsible for what happens to Richard—as she seemed responsible for what happened to the other men.

—Donna J. Oestrich-Hart, 2000

Richard is a sinner who knows himself as such and who cannot repent. Without grace there is no essential self... Richard fended off any responsibility for his own actions for as long as he could blame himself on his ontological beginnings, and hence on his mother. Her rejection of him signifies not only that humanity as a whole has turned against him, but also that he must take new account of himself... "Richard loves Richard" is a last-ditch gesture towards self-engendering through a narcissistic embrace of self, as well as a sad parody of God's love for humanity.

—John Jowett, 2000

Richard is defeated in non-military ways: because, for example, kingship is an empty goal, because memory and knowledge of his crimes are actively instrumental in his downfall, and because his sardonic hostility to others can not for ever stave off his participation in a social and moral world. It is the women who identify or implement these causes of defeat.

—John Jowett, 2000

In Richard III, Gloucester carries the forward-looking, atomistic post-Reformation attitude towards death to the extreme, while the mourning women repeatedly obstruct his progress with their vigils for the dead... As the play suggests, the ability to mourn as a community—to acknowledge the political and moral consequences of the past, not simply in the form of private compunction, but also in a public forum that allows the expression of intense grief—is essential to the functioning and continuity of a cohesive society.

—Katharine Goodland, 2002

Like a shark, Richard must always be moving forward, away from what he is and what he has done.

—Stephen Brown, 2002

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

2000s



Although [Margaret] is not represented as a ghost, she haunts the play like a soul from purgatory. Ghostlike, she stands—and speaks—outside the main action (only she and Richard have asides), and when she does make contact with others, they seem unable to act upon her.
—Janis Lull, 2002

Richard understands that the ability to shape the narrative of history is indistinguishable from the ability to shape the events of history itself. Richard's murders are not violent; there is little sense in them of bloodlust. He merely wants his victims to be absolutely silent, to have no say. There is no one more vulnerable than the dead because they have no control over their own stories. Richard understands better than anyone that dead men tell no tales.

—Stephen Marche, 2003

***Richard III* has, Frankenstein-like, (indeed, *Frankenstein*-like) escaped from its creator, into the wilderness of a disturbing psychological and historical terrain. And it is of the essence of the play that its performers have given it life in a way that commentators have more often than not been unable to.**

Richard being the towering presence and master manipulator that he is, absorbs the audience's attention fully; at the same time, however, by making Richard's rhetorical wizardry the primary focus of our attention, Shakespeare is craftily revealing to us our own besottedness as dupes of his greater rhetorical sleight-of-hand.

—Trevor McNeely, 2004

Clarence does nothing but demonstrate his nobility and humanity. Shakespeare goes out of his way to make Clarence sympathetic... The Clarence of the stage struggles against the Clarence of history. And the Clarence of the stage believes himself to be on the verge of a breakthrough just before he dies... The murderers will have none of this talk of honesty, this comforting beggar-prince equivocation. For perhaps the first and only time in the scene, everything is perfectly clear: the murderers at last do the job they were sent to do. History, comedy and tragedy converge on the point of a knife.

—Jeremy Lopez, 2005

Richard III has, Frankenstein-like, (indeed, Frankenstein-like) escaped from its creator, into the wilderness of a disturbing psychological and historical terrain. And it is of the essence of the play that its performers have given it life in a way that commentators have more often than not been unable to.

—Edward Burns, 2006

TO BE
CONTINUED...

A LOOK BACK AT RICHARD III IN PERFORMANCE

Richard III has been a stalwart of the stage since its first performances in the late sixteenth century—indeed, it is one of the most continually performed of all of Shakespeare’s plays. Richard Burbage, the preeminent tragic actor of Shakespeare’s company, originated the role in 1593 and it remained one of his most popular creations. There is little documentation of revivals of *Richard III* during the seventeenth century, but in 1700 the English actor Colley Cibber adapted the play—adding lines from *Richard II*, *Henry V* and *Henry VI*, entirely reworking Shakespeare’s original verse to “improve” the play for his contemporaries’ tastes, cutting the very long text by more than two-thirds, and eliminating several major characters. Not until Sir Henry Irving’s production in 1877 was Shakespeare’s text, though still abridged, restored—but Cibber’s play remained on English and American stages into the twentieth century.

Performing Cibber’s text, the great eighteenth-century British actor David Garrick brought to this role a psychological depth so profound that it virtually revolutionized the conventions of tragic acting. One critic described this extraordinary performance of this brilliant 24-year-old actor:

The moment he entered the scene, the character he assumed was visible in his countenance; the power of his imagination was such that he transformed himself into the very man; the passions rose in rapid succession, and before he uttered a word, were legible in every feature of that various face... All was rage, fury, and almost reality.

The Romanticism of the early nineteenth century made for emotional responses to *Richard III*, culminating in the electrifying performance by one of England’s greatest actors, Edmund Kean. Upon seeing Kean’s fiery, passionate performance, the poet Lord Byron wrote: “Just returned from seeing Kean in Richard. By Jove! he is a soul! Life, Nature—truth, without exaggeration or diminution... Richard is a man and Kean is Richard.”



photo: Liz Lauren

LORD STANLEY (ROBERT SCOGIN) AND EDWARD IV (PETER AYLWARD) IN CST’S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

The great Victorian actor Henry Irving, who acknowledged the influence of Kean’s acting style upon his own, played Richard with Shakespeare’s original text, finally abandoning Cibber at the end of the nineteenth century. Actor Charles Calvert’s “Grand Historical Revival of *The Life and Death of Richard III*...perfect in correctness of detail and accuracy of mis-en-scène” was staged in 1870, on the eve of Napoleon III’s anticipated invasion of Britain, in a production that emphasized a nascent democracy in Richard’s eventual downfall.

A democratic spirit did not always greet performances of this time, however. The first black theater group in America, the African Company, opened in 1821 in New York with James Hewlet, and later the most celebrated black actor of his time, Ira Aldridge, in the title role of *Richard III*. The political terrorism of the play also finds a peculiar reflection in this period with Junius Brutus Booth’s portrayal of Richard in 1817 at the London’s Covent Garden, and throughout the United States in the years that followed. The English father of Abraham Lincoln’s assassin John Wilkes Booth, Mr. Booth made himself up to look like his predecessor Kean and was said

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to have lived the part of Richard so fully that he tried to kill Richmond on stage.

Creating perhaps the best-known Richard of the modern era, Sir Laurence Olivier's virtuoso performance in 1944 at The Old Vic dazzled and chilled its war-fatigued audiences. With a false nose and cruel, sardonic voice, Olivier as Richard was "a bravura display of a hypnotic actor playing a hypnotic actor, for his king is a sly, resourceful master of the revels who woos and plays to the audience, while he manipulates all the characters in the drama," as one critic wrote. In 1955, Olivier directed and starred in the film of *Richard III*. Returning to parts of Cibber's text, this was the first Shakespearean movie to have both color and sound, and the first Shakespeare film to be shown on television when it was aired by NBC in 1956. Four decades later it is perhaps the most widely recognized and lauded film interpretation ever made of a Shakespeare play.

The jester role further emphasized Richard's theatricality in a production that frequently acknowledged the audience's experience viewing the play by exposing dramatic conventions.

Many contemporary directors, trying to distinguish theirs from Olivier, have presented a Richard who is the antithesis of Olivier's—less dramatic, less theatrical and more stoic and witty. Tyrone Guthrie opened the new Stratford Festival in Canada in 1953 with Alec Guinness in the title role. Guinness portrayed a Richard characterized more by his mordant wit and crass behavior than by a hypnotic, villainous power. As one critic put it, "Despite his hunchback and his withered arm, his grotesque shadow that he hates, he's no monster. He's a wily, sly and ruthless man, virile, comic and quite charming at times; grubbily intelligent."

In the 1984 Royal Shakespeare Company production, Antony Sher finally laid to rest the ghost of Olivier's

virtuoso performance with his highly physical approach to the role. The costuming for his character included a pair of spindly crutches, which Sher used to underline Richard's theatricality—the debilitation of his deformity became yet another act he could put on as needed. The insect-like look was completed by long sleeves that trailed off Sher's medieval-influenced black silk tunic. Taken with the crutches and Sher's own thin legs, the effect was of a six-legged creature, the "bottled spider" of the text. Seizing on this metaphor, as well as Shakespeare's other abundant animal imagery, Sher played Richard as part animal, part spider, part man. One critic wrote:

Mr. Sher gives the most mesmerizing, mischievous performance of a lifetime. Never before (not even in the Olivier film) have I felt a sense of loss when the evil genius, the gargoyled toad who closes the curtain on the Plantagenets, is eliminated. Somehow it is fitting that clear-faced Henry Richmond, in the act of becoming the first Tudor monarch, should stab the horseless, dying Richard in the back, the sword seeming both crucifix and stake, the exorcism of Dracula.

A later RSC production from 1995, featuring David Troughton in the title role, also played on the metaphors Richard uses in the text, this time transforming Gloucester into a self-appointed jester version of the morality figure of Vice. Instead of leading an army to Bosworth, Troughton's Richard led a carnival-style brass band into battle. The jester role further emphasized Richard's theatricality in a production that frequently acknowledged the audience's experience viewing the play by exposing dramatic conventions, like re-setting a scene in full-lighted view of the audience, and aligning the "omniscient" auditorium audience with the few characters, such as the ghosts and the Duchess of York, who see through Richard's charade.

In 1960 a Polish production of *Richard III* served as a vehicle for the formulation of Shakespearean critic and scholar Jan Kott's groundbreaking theory of "The Grand Mechanism" in Shakespeare's history plays—a theory that presented history as an essentially endless but meaningless process. Director Jacek Woszczerowicz portrayed Richard as a philosopher and a catalyst through which to measure the dark side of human nature that creates history. The play became a parable about the struggle for power, its

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photo: Michael Brosilow

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER (JAY WHITTAKER) IN CST'S *ROSE RAGE: HENRY VI PARTS 1, 2, AND 3*, DIRECTED BY EDWARD HALL (2003)

consequences, and its destructive impact on the weak and deficient nature of man. Richard is given Richmond's words at the beginning of the play, and the final repetition reveals the "good and honest" Richmond to be nothing more than Richard's double, who will repeat his gestures and crimes in the years to come. In the production's opening and closing moments, iron bars appeared on four sides of the stage, confining the men of the play within the Grand Mechanism of Power, where they are left to die, sacrificed to sustain the Mechanism's existence.

Peter Hall and John Barton's 1963 *Wars of the Roses*, as well as Adrian Noble's 1988 *The Plantagenets*, were adaptations of the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*—performed together, they highlighted the historical context of Richard's story. *The Wars of the Roses* commented upon the

ever-shifting ground of both personal values and political machinations. With a pared-down script eliminating many of his asides, the character of Richard was portrayed downplaying his rhetorical flair—a minimalist take that disappointed some critics, but supported Hall and Barton's interpretation that terrible wrongdoing in the guise of politics can be committed by "any man in any age." Richard's ascent became what Peter Hall called a "classic coup d'état."

Again drawing a political parallel, Ian McKellen starred in a 1990 production at the Royal National Theatre in London that transposed the setting to a fictionalized 1930s England, with Richard as a Hitler-like fascist king. *The New York Times* review noted, "Neither a crookback nor sexually overheated, Mr. McKellen's king is a stunning antiheroic alternative to the archetypal Olivier image." In 1995, a film version of the same concept with a screenplay penned by McKellen opened in movie theaters worldwide, offering a commentary on current political events—not unlike what Shakespeare offered to his audience in writing the play. Chicago film critic Michael Wilmington praised McKellen's performance, but added that "the under-two-hours mass movie format...strips [the famous quotes] from their context like TV sound bites. So condensed is the drama, that Richard seems to be racing through his crimes, like a man on destiny's stopwatch." The star-studded cast included Annette Bening as Queen Elizabeth, Robert Downey, Jr. as her brother Lord Rivers, Nigel Hawthorne as Clarence and Maggie Smith as the Duchess of York. McKellen's website has a detailed history of the production, including the complete screenplay.

In the production's opening and closing moments, iron bars appeared on four sides of the stage, confining the men of the play within the Grand Mechanism of Power, where they are left to die.

Al Pacino's 1996 film *Looking for Richard*, documenting his three-year investigation into the play, is widely regarded

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photo: Liz Lauren

RICHARD III (BRENDAN CORBALIS) AND QUEEN ELIZABETH (LISA DODSON) IN CST'S 1996 PRODUCTION OF *RICHARD III*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

as an insightful exploration of the art of acting as well as of the play itself. By featuring actors like Alec Baldwin, Kevin Spacey and Winona Ryder from a behind-the-scenes perspective and intercutting scenes of the play with vignettes of the actors' experience, the film makes a larger statement about Shakespeare's enduring place in popular culture and art. A comprehensive review from *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* focuses on Pacino's passion for Shakespeare and the film's effectiveness as both film and marketing tool for Shakespeare. The most surprising recent development of *Richard III* on film has been the rediscovery of a 1912 version, the oldest complete American silent feature film.

In recent years, the play has been well mined for post-modern interpretations and modern parables. In the early 1990s, Chicago's Footsteps Theatre staged the play as part of its all-female Classical Project. Other all-female productions followed at London's Globe Theatre as part of Mark Rylance's "Regime Change" season, which also featured an all-male production of that "other" Richard, *Richard II*. Incorporating more contemporary touches, a 2001 adaptation titled *Richard 3* featured three individual and strikingly different looking actors playing the title role, as well as biohazard suits, rap music and video effects. During the coronation scene in a 2007 production at the Classic Stage Company in New York, paper flags bearing Richard's insignia were distributed for the audience to

wave on cue, as they might at a presidential convention. Other productions have re-imagined the play as taking place entirely in a mental institution, in the board rooms and bowler hats of modern British businessmen, and in the 2009 adaptation entitled *Richard III: An Arab Tragedy*, among the shifting dynasties of a 21st-century Persian Gulf state.

Antithetical to the pervasive conspiring, posturing and violent male world of *Richard III*, its female roles have proved historically problematic in production. Starting in Cibber's day with the obliteration of Margaret, in production the female roles have been cut entirely, constricted or condensed from multiple parts into one. By 1984, the same production that featured Anthony Sher as a spidery, malevolent Richard cast Frances Tomelty as a particularly political Elizabeth. Rather than establishing her position as a more traditional outgrowth of grief and guilt, this post-feminist Elizabeth instead maneuvered for power in a way that reflected Richard's own ambitions. Her moral objections instead became machinations of a realpolitik sensibility shown in Act 4 as she physically circled, and finally settled into the throne as Richard pressed for a union with her daughter. Elizabeth inverted the power structure, using her own sexuality to bind her commitment to Richard and impose her own expectations onto the deal.

Antithetical to the pervasive conspiring, posturing and violent male world of *Richard III*, its female roles have proved historically problematic in production.

The role of the ghosts has been as variously interpreted in performance as the roles of the play's women. The ghosts of Richard's battlefield dream have been seen as elements of the supernatural, sometimes drawn physically into the final confrontation with Richmond as arbiters from beyond the grave in Richard's downfall. The influence of modern psychology has represented Richard's victims' ghosts as manifestations of deep-seated guilt, physically helpless

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to impact the actions around them but powerful forces in Richard's unraveling and ultimate demise. In Barton and Hall's *Wars of the Roses*, the ghosts commiserated with Richard's impending defeat, instead of acting as harbingers of revenge or deserved justice—his victims perched around him, playing tag, cradling his head, embracing and kissing him. Sam Mendes (known for directing the films *American Beauty*, *Revolutionary Road*, and most recently, *Away We Go*) staged his ghosts similarly in a 1992 production, seating them along a conference table with wine and balloons, toasting first Richard and then Richmond, while an ominous and somewhat otherworldly Margaret looked on. Conversely, Michael Boyd's 2001 *Richard III* had the ghosts advance upon the sleeping king with violence, recreating the

too often produced as if the ladies are mere props for all the macho posturing.” The audience was drawn into the experience of the women, as when Richard exposed his unsightly hump to Lady Anne, inviting both her and the silent spectators beyond to empathize with the agony of his deformity.

While *Richard III* has changed considerably in its 400-plus years on stage, from melodramatic spectacle and psychological examination to historical epic and post-modern pantomime (including at least one “equestrian” production from 1880), Richard himself has never ceased to intrigue directors and audiences alike—he is, and will remain, the villain we love to hate.

Richard himself has never ceased to intrigue directors and audiences alike—he is, and will remain, the villain we love to hate.

actions of their own murders against their murderer before returning to observe his death on the battlefield.

CST's previous production of *Richard III*, directed by Barbara Gaines at the Ruth Page Theatre in 1996, featured the ghosts appearing through a mirror, replacing Richard's unguarded gaze at his own reflection with a horde of victims loosed from the flames of hell, created by scenic designer Alex Okun, resident designer with the Moscow Art Theatre and son of the stage designer for the Moscow Circus, and lighting designer Kenneth Posner. Described by the *Chicago Sun-Times* as “the form, literally, of a vast ship of state, with a raw wood deck and trap doors and a great expanse of overhead beams,” Okun's set reflected the emotional territory of the play, capturing sculptural images of the different settings by manipulating these static elements, where visual tricks were key to creating the spiritual world on stage. Ms. Gaines' production placed a greater importance on the women of *Richard III*, who as *Newcity* noted were “nicely foregrounded in a play



COSTUME DESIGNER SUSAN E. MICKY'S RENDERING OF THE GHOST OF WARWICK FOR CST'S 2009 PRODUCTION *RICHARD III*



THEATER WARM-UPS

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well. And, perhaps most important, it helps students focus, as well as build community (“ensemble”).

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s tools.

PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

Getting started

- ◆ creates focus on the immediate moment
- ◆ brings students to body awareness
- ◆ helps dispel tension

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

Warm-up from the top of the body down *(This should take approximately 7 to 10 minutes.)*

- ◆ gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness,
- ◆ increases physical and spatial awareness

- Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.
- Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.
- Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.
- From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.
- Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
- Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

◆ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

VOCAL WARM-UPS

Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly (*Approx. 7 min.*)

- ◆ helps connect physicality to vocality
 - ◆ begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities
- (a) Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
- (b) Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that’s often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.
- (c) Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”
- (d) Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.
- (e) Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face —A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.
- (f) Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

Tongue twisters

- ◆ red leather, yellow leather ... (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- ◆ unique New York ... (focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- ◆ rubber, baby, buggie, bumpers ... (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- ◆ Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers ... (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This can be a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

Stage pictures

- ◆ show how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- ◆ encourage the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- ◆ begin to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like

◆ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. Encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might “Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees.”

After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. *(This activity should take about 10 minutes.)*

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad: crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

Mirroring

- ◆ helps build trust within the ensemble
- ◆ encourages the students to “listen” with all their senses
- ◆ helps the students reach a state of “relaxed readiness,” which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other’s small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. *(This activity should last about 10 minutes.)*

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting: it keeps the moment real.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students’ imaginations, increase their sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and bring them “into the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor’s training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each

◆ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

Zing! Ball (*This exercise requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter.*)

- ◆ helps the ensemble grow together
- ◆ helps the students let go of their internal “censor” and begin tapping into their impulses
- ◆ brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries energy with it. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say “Zing!” Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. (*This activity lasts about five minutes.*)

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

Zing! Ball without a Ball (*This activity takes 5 to 7 minutes.*)

- ◆ asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- ◆ focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zing!,” toss the ball to an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they’ve changed it. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare’s plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor’s job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

1. *(Excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare's language or descriptive of character. Distribute a line or lines to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who speaks it.)*
Look at your line/s and, as you walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Now walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, each reading your line aloud in turn.

Sit down in the circle and discuss the lines. What questions do you have about the words? Imagine what this play is about based upon some of the words you've heard its characters speak. What do you imagine about the character who spoke your line? Did you hear lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character? All ideas are encouraged, and none can be wrong! This is your time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you've just entered. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Aa, 1Ab, 1Ba, 1Ca, 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ab, 4Aa, 4A4c)**

2. Who ARE all these people? There are many characters in *Richard III* and a lot of the time it's hard to keep them straight, with two Richards, two Elizabeths and three Edwards! Take a look and explore the genealogy chart on page 18 which might help you keep everyone straight. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cf, 2Ab)**

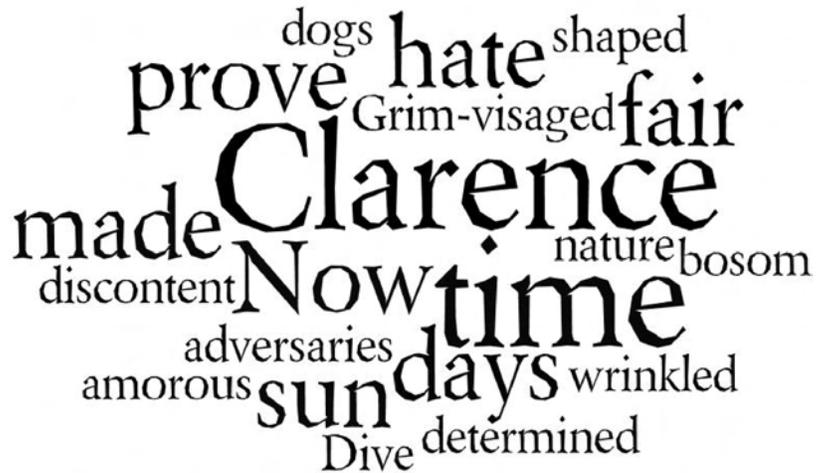
3. "I am determined to prove a villain." So says Richard of Gloucester, who (as the title has already given away!) will become King Richard III—by any means necessary. But what makes a villain? Brainstorm characters that come to mind at the word "villain" and compile images of these famous figures—they can be fictional, historical, caricatures, or controversies, but 10 is a good number to start with. Create an image and word web to show the similarities that link these figures. You might want to begin by grouping them by such categories as intelligence, appearance, personal history or methods. Within your web, identify: (1) the two figures that exemplify the most distinctly different definitions of "villain"; (2) the three most common characteristics of villains; and (3) which villain most intrigues or repulses you and why. As you read *Richard III*, return to your web and see how Richard matches up to your definition of villainy. Does he challenge any of your ideas about the nature of a villain? Once you finish the play, place him on your web. What other villains is he most like, in your mind? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 1B3b, 2A4b, 1Cc, 1Ce)**

4. When first reading Shakespeare on the page, it can be difficult to discern meaning from the cloud of words you're facing. What better way to take a step back and understand the opening of *Richard III* than with a literal word cloud? The following illustration was created at wordle.net out of the twenty most unique and frequently used words in Richard's opening soliloquy. Word placement is random, but the larger a word is, the more frequently it appears. Before you read the soliloquy itself, take a look at Richard's word choices and predict what you think this monologue will be about. Who is Clarence? What is the mood at the beginning of the play? Write down or discuss your impressions. Also, find



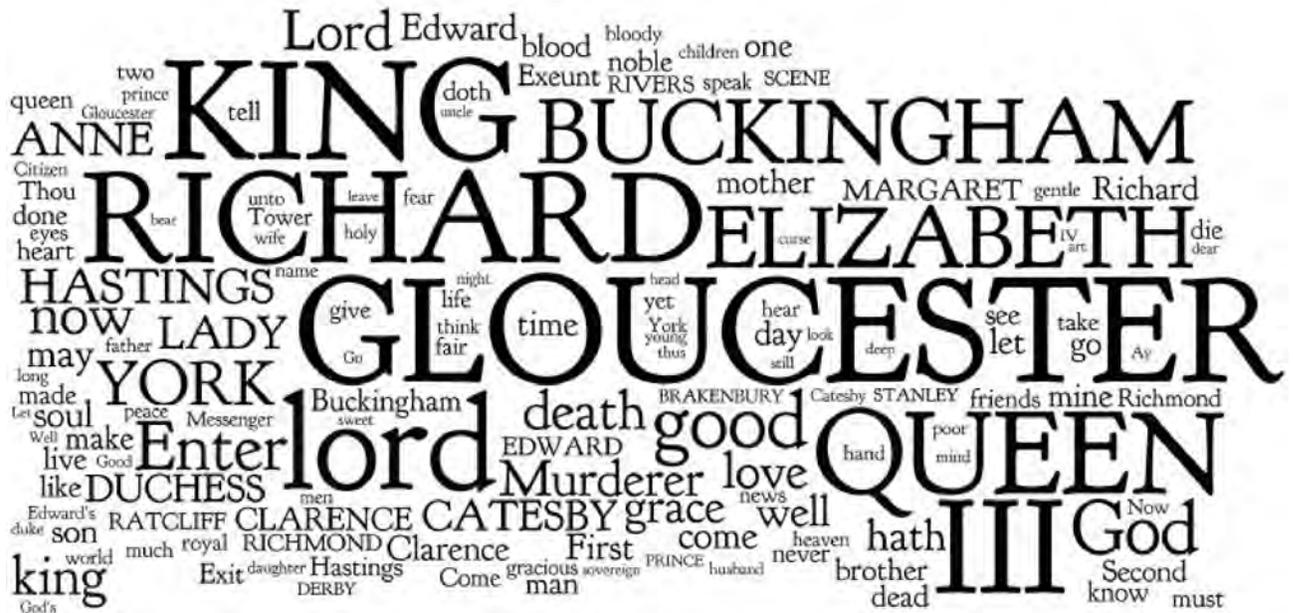
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

definitions of any words that you don't understand. Then read the soliloquy, highlighting the words that appear in the below cloud. How are they being used? Differently than you expected? Once you understand what Richard is saying, rearrange the words in the cloud to relate to each other and tell the story as you understand it so far. Feel free to fill in the white space with your own words. As you run across more Richard monologues, you can make more word clouds at wordle.net. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4b, 1B5a, 1C4a, 2A4d, 2B4a, 3A)



5.

Below is a word cloud created at wordle.net from the entire text of *Richard III*. Words in ALL CAPS are names of characters. Before you read the play, look at this word cloud as a class. What does the play seem to be most concerned with? Choose a word or words that interest you and that you think might indicate big ideas in the play. Try to write as many different meanings as you can think of or think about how that word is relevant to your own life. Save your writing and return to it as you encounter the word in the play—how do your ideas relate to Shakespeare's story? This activity is also excellent in a timed, improvisational spoken word or slam poetry format. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1B4b, 1C5b, 2Ab)



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

6. When you first begin to read or listen to a Shakespeare play, you might feel as though you're faced with a sea of words, way too deep to plunge into. But Shakespeare built in lots of clues to help his actors learn their lines in the few short days they had to rehearse before performing a new play. Before our actors put a scene "on its feet," they "score" the text, marking certain relationships between the words that help anchor them as they wade through the first few times. You can do the same. Richard's opening soliloquy is full of *antitheses* (opposite or contrasting words) and *repetitions* (identical or similar words). In pairs, work through the opening soliloquy, reading it aloud, and alternating line by line: the first time, circle and draw lines between each antithesis you discover; the second time through, underline and draw lines between all the repetitions you find. Don't worry about being "right" or "wrong": chances are, if you see any connection at all, Shakespeare may have had it in his mind, too—so err on the side of finding too many, not too few! (And don't forget the pronouns...)

Now, read the text a third time—up on your feet! Each time you come to a word that's been circled or underlined, give it special, dramatic (hyper-dramatic!) emphasis. Go over the top—and don't worry about not understanding every word along the way. Reconvene as a class, and discuss what you discovered in this "sea of words" that opens *Richard III*. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 2Aa, 2A4c, 4Ab, 4Bd)

7. Shakespeare wrote the majority of his plays and sonnets in iambic pentameter—lines of 10 syllables each in which every other syllable is accented or emphasized, starting with the second syllable:

"In sooth, I know not why I am so sad." (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.1.1)

"The course of true love never did run smooth." (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.1.134)

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" (*Richard III*, 5.3.361)

Pick a short speech from the play, like Richard's soliloquy at the end of Act 1 scene 1, "He cannot live I hope, and must not die." Try standing and reading the speech as a group. Let your feet feel the rhythm in the speech by tapping on every other syllable. Or in a row of 10, line up and recite the line, each person in line taking one syllable. Speak it again, and like the pistons in an engine, kneel on the accented syllable as you speak it, leaving your row at the end of the line five up, five down. Finally, try the line again, this time passing off the word to the next in line as smoothly (and quickly) as if it were a baton in a relay race—so that the entire line is spoken as if by one person. You won't read it like this when you are acting it out or trying to understand it, but often your body can feel the rhythm in words better than your ear can hear it. You can try this with other selections that have a clear meter, either from Shakespeare or other works, such as poems (William Blake works well) or even Dr. Seuss books! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4Aa, 4Ab, 4Bb)

8. An "acting circle" involves the entire class approaching the characters and their relationships through the language of a single scene. Act 1 scene 3 (ending with the entrance of Queen Margaret) is a great place to start—and you need not be familiar with the play yet at all! Position yourselves in a circle, facing one another. Let the words take you from one person to the next in your circle, reading it through several times:

- ◆ First, each person reads up to the next punctuation mark (ignoring commas) and stops, the next person in the circle taking up from there until the next punctuation;
- ◆ Repeat the read-through, but this time as you hear the words, circle any words or phrases that you're uncertain about.

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Now, begin to discuss this section you've just listened to twice. Here are some of the questions you might be exploring:

- ◆ Who are Rivers and Grey? What seems to be their relationship to the Queen? What do we know about each of them from *this scene alone*? (Remember, you can't bring into this discussion any information that you've not learned from these lines alone!)
- ◆ Where are they? Why are they there? What's happened to them? What seems to be their relationship with the King? What do we learn about the King?
- ◆ What is their relationship to Richard Gloucester?
- ◆ Who are Buckingham and Stanley, Earl of Derby? What news do they bring into the scene we didn't have before? Who is on whose side? What do they seem to fear?
- ◆ What do we learn about the King?
- ◆ What is the relationship between Richard and the others present? What do people say about Richard? Is anyone allied to Richard? How can you tell?
- ◆ What does Richard say about himself? What does he imply about others?
- ◆ What do we learn about Clarence?
- ◆ What does Richard feel about the King's marriage to Elizabeth?
- ◆ What is the conflict?

Now that you've explored the scene a bit, return to the words or phrases that stumped you. What can you sort out from the context alone? What clues does the script hold? If there are still words after your discussion that the class hasn't figured out, assign as homework to do research in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or at shakespeareswords.com before the next session of class.

- ◆ Return to the scene again to read through a third time, this time changing readers at the end of each speaker's part.
- ◆ Twice more now, with different volunteers each time assuming the speaking roles.

Now it's time to put the scene "up on its feet." With the rest of the class serving as directors, six people volunteer to act out the parts. Thinking back to the possibilities you discussed earlier, let your discussion inform your acting decisions now. As your classmates take the stage, interject your questions to help them clarify their parts: Where are they? What's just happened? Who are they? What's the relationship between them? What does their conversation tell us about them? Any question that helps you understand the action is fair game! And you might want to "rewind" the action and try another take as your directors help guide you through the scene. Be playful in your approach, and explore some different possibilities! (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Ca, 4Aa, 4A5b, 4B4b**)

9.

Throughout the play, Richard uses language to change people's perception of reality or play to their sympathies. How does language color the way we think about a story? Find a human interest story—a type of news feature with an upbeat attitude about individuals or a community. Consider the word choice and other rhetorical devices that



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

create your impression of the piece carefully, because now it's your turn to be the "dissembler." Using only the information provided in the original article, turn this human interest story into an exposé—an accusatory or revelatory article about some misdeeds or scandal. Can you "spin" the facts with artful omission, word choice, and other devices to turn the tone of the piece inside-out, *implying* that one particularly industrious Girl Scout used cut-throat methods to sell the most cookies in the state? Or that a fireman who rescued a cat from a tree did so because of his shady ulterior motives? Though you may artfully omit and reword things from the original, be careful not to fabricate any new information—that takes the challenge out of it! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Bb, 2Aa, 2Ac, 3A, 3Ba)**

10. In groups of 5/6: Practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that characters from *Richard III* sling at each other. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to the meaning than you might think... Then, taking eight quotes, imagine a contemporary situation that might prompt such a rebuke. (For example, your younger brother refuses to listen to your reasoning and storms out of the room while you're in the middle of a big argument: "*Stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me.*")

<i>Foul devil, for God's sake hence, and trouble us not.</i>	1.2.50
<i>Thou lump of foul deformity!</i>	1.2.57
<i>O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!</i>	1.2.73
<i>[You] diffus'd infection of a man!</i>	1.2.78
<i>Thou art unfit for any place but hell.</i>	1.2.111
<i>Never hung poison on a fouler toad.</i>	1.2.151
<i>Out of my sight! Thou dost infect my eyes.</i>	1.2.152
<i>Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave this world, Thou cacodemon: there thy kingdom is.</i>	1.3.143-4
<i>Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider?</i>	
<i>Fool, fool; thou whet'st a knife to kill thyself.</i>	1.3.241
<i>You are malapert.</i>	1.3.255
<i>Thy voice is thunder, but thy looks are humble.</i>	1.4.158
<i>Fie, what a slug is [he].</i>	3.1.22
<i>Here comes the sweating lord.</i>	3.1.24
<i>A knot you are of damned bloodsuckers.</i>	3.3.6
<i>Drop into the rotten mouth of death.</i>	4.4.2
<i>From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death.</i>	4.4.47
<i>That bottled spider, that foul bunch-back'd toad!</i>	4.4.81
<i>That my nails were anchor'd in thine eyes!</i>	4.4.232
<i>[You] wretched, bloody, and usurping boar!</i>	5.2.7
<i>A milksop! One that never in his life Felt so much cold as over-shoes in snow.</i>	5.3.326-27

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Staying in your groups, reconvene as a class. Each group presents in turn one insult-provoking situation to the rest of the class. The other groups compete to come up first with an appropriate answer from the list, and score is kept. (It need not be the same insult that the group had in mind, as long as it makes sense!) **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Aa, 1Bc, 2B4c, 4Ba)**

11. Richard is described as “fiend,” “devil,” “foul, bunch-back’d toad,” “slave of Nature,” and “elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog.” Yet the portraits completed during his lifetime depict a healthy-looking man. Create your own portrait of Shakespeare’s Richard based on his historical appearance and Shakespeare’s descriptions (see below for a fuller list). If you were designing the costumes and make up for a production of *Richard III*, how would you achieve this look on an actor? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1Ce, 2Bb, 5B5b)**

- ◆ dreadful minister of hell
- ◆ son of hell
- ◆ foul toad
- ◆ slander of thy heavy mother’s womb
- ◆ hell’s black intelligencer
- ◆ loathèd issue of thy father’s loins
- ◆ hedgehog
- ◆ foul defacer of God’s handiwork
- ◆ hell hound that doth hunt us all to death
- ◆ poisonous bunch back’d toad
- ◆ dog that had his teeth before his eyes
- ◆ foul bunch-backed toad
- ◆ elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog



12. One of the reasons that Shakespeare’s plays are still so enjoyed is that their stories relate to our own experiences in life. Though written about kings and queens living back in the 1400s, *Richard III* has many situations that may seem familiar to you. Jot down some of your ideas about one of the following situations. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 2Ba, 3A, 2Bb)**

- ◆ Think about a time you when felt you were seen as “different” from the rest of your peers. Maybe you were the first one in class to wear glasses. Or the only one with red hair or the tallest in your class. How did people respond that made you feel “different”? What did you want to say to them? Did it affect the way you acted around them? How did “being different” make you feel?
- ◆ Have you ever been in a situation where someone talked you into doing something you really did not want to do? How did you feel? Pressured? scared? curious? flattered? Looking back, do you wish you would have reacted to their pressure in a different way? If so, why?
- ◆ Have you ever wanted something so badly that you would have done pretty much anything to get it? What was it you wanted? Why was it so important to you? What was in your way of getting it?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Have you ever radically, drastically, changed your opinion about someone in a moment? Write about the person and the situation.

13. “Now is the winter of our discontent...” Richard begins with one of Shakespeare’s most famous monologues. But what is he *saying*? Divide the monologue into sections—like a good essay, it has an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. In small groups, summarize your section of the monologue. Translate it into modern language. Then, create a tableau, or frozen picture with just your bodies, to accompany the original text. Show your classmates, putting your section of the monologue in context with others’ until you complete the entire monologue. What do you now understand about the speech that you initially did not? What parts still need clarification? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 3B4c, 4Ba)**

14. Think of four figures that come to your mind at the word “villain.” Create “villain trading cards” for each of these figures with a standardized format (see our suggested format below). How would each of these villains rise to power as monarch of England? How do you predict that Richard III will? What skills will he need to possess to do so? Will he need to be as cunning as Catwoman? As supernatural as Freddy Kruger? Create a *Richard III* trading card when you’re done with the play to complete your set. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Ca, 2Ba, 3Cb, 5C4a)**

**FRONT
(LAYOUT)**

NAME

[image of character]

“A quote the villain is famous for or that sums up their character.”

NAME
of Title of Work of Origin
OR
(Birth Year–Death Year)

Enemy of:
Rate the qualities of this character’s personality or list their skills here, such as...

Intelligence: ■■■□

Weapons: A pen that is mightier than the sword

A character description goes here—keep it short!

**BACK
(LAYOUT)**

**FRONT
(EXAMPLE)**

SNIDELY WHIPLASH



“Curses! Foiled again!”

SNIDELY WHIPLASH
of Rocky and Bullwinkle

Arch Enemy of:
Dudley Do-Right

Intelligence: ■□□□
Determination: ■■■□
Cruelty: ■■□□
Charm: ■□□□
Physical Prowess: ■■□□

Snidely’s wickedness knows only the bounds that bind Nell Fenwick to the train tracks.

**BACK
(EXAMPLE)**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

AS YOU READ THE PLAY

ACT I

1. Richard is a man of action, or so it seems... Alternating readers, read aloud the scene between Richard and Lady Anne (Act 1 scene 2). Switch genders!— have a male read Lady Anne’s lines and a female read Richard’s. Next, brainstorm all possible reasons that Anne finally gives in to Richard’s proposal. Does she love Richard? Does she really believe he only killed her husband to be with her? After all your brainstorming take a poll about which reason is the most plausible. What reason won? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1B5d, 1Ca, 2A4a, 2B4c)**

2. Set up a talk show with Lady Anne and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as guests. You’re the host and your classmates are the audience. What questions would you ask your guests? You could do it in period or translate to modern day, but make sure the ideas, personalities and values are similar to Shakespeare’s intention. Who would you invite to the show as supporters to Lady Anne? To support Richard? What are his goals? What are hers? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ab, 4A4d, 4Bb, 4Bc)**

3. After agreeing to marry Richard, Anne needs some advice from her former mother-in-law, Queen Margaret. In pairs, one will write a letter as Anne, to Margaret, asking for advice after she has accepted Richard’s proposal; the other writes a letter as Margaret, to Anne, giving advice to her daughter-in-law after she has accepted Richard’s proposal.

Next, split the class into three groups of 8-10 (i.e. 3-4 pairs per group). After reading one another’s letters, each person selects one line from his partner’s letter to contribute to the group poem. As a group, work out the poem created from your contributed lines. You’ll want to think about...

- ◆ the order of the lines
- ◆ whether certain lines are repeated more than once
- ◆ whether some lines are spoken chorally
- ◆ the sound and tone of your poem (its “cadence”)

Standing in the order of your lines, read aloud your poem for the rest of the class. (If lines are repeated, you’ll insert yourself into the line in different places so that others see your composition choices.) The class will continue the editing process, each time listening to the poem in its different versions, as you reach a consensus about the most powerful version of your choral poem. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 3A, 3Bb, 3C5a, 4Bb)**

4. One of Richard III’s more endearing qualities is that he manages to be a half-step ahead all of the other characters on stage. What Richard *really* thinks as opposed to what he says to his fellow citizens and subjects is reserved for his soliloquies shared with us through this first act. Use some of the following:

- ◆ Act 1 scene 1, approximately lines 1-41
- ◆ Act 1 scene 1, approximately lines 144-162
- ◆ Act 1 scene 2, approximately lines 232-268
- ◆ Act 1 scene 3, approximately lines 324-339

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



One way of making sense of these extended monologues is to pick a number from a hat corresponding to one of the lines in your text of the speech—one number for each of the lines in the soliloquy. After taking three or four minutes to look it over, form a large circle where each class member reads his/her line as the speech progresses around the circle. To introduce more variety to the activity, stand wherever you like in the circle so that the speech loses its predictability in terms of being passed along a continuous line. As the reading is repeated a number of times, the feeling behind the words should grow in intensity. Swapping lines with other people will also produce a different reading simply by new voices, emphasis and inflection. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1B5b, 1B5d, 2A4d)**

5. Richard uses soliloquies throughout the play to share his thoughts, feelings and plans with the audience. This convention of confiding in one's audience has not been lost—we still see it used today: in reality shows that include private confessionals, in mockumentaries like *The Office* with its “talking heads,” and everyday people using YouTube and blogs to share and vent their woes to the world. Imagine you are Richard with the technological advances of today and update his soliloquy at the end of Act I scene 2, “Was ever woman in the humor wooed...” You can write a journal entry, blog post, or tape yourself à la *Survivor*. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 1C5d, 2Ba, 3Cb)**

6. Drama is the embodiment of conflict. Role-play the wooing scene between Richard and Lady Anne (Act 1 scene 2). As a class, discuss the possible motivations of Richard and of Anne. There are no right or wrong answers—this is a scene that has fascinated scholars for centuries!

Using some of the same motivations that you explored in Shakespeare's text, translate or adapt the scene for a modern-day audience, using different character names and different locale (e.g. a mall) and everyday speech or slang. The golden rule in drama is conflict. What is the conflict between these two individuals? Is there a winner? Are your reactions in any way similar to those of Richard and Lady Anne? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A5b, 1B5a, 1Cb, 2A5b)**

7. *Was ever woman in this humor wooed?/ Was ever woman in this humor won?/ I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.*
—Richard (1.2.232-234)

Based on this passage, what would you say is Richard's attitude toward women? As you read the play, write down any reference made about a woman in the play or women in general. How does this compare with our 21st-century views of women? In turn, how do the women feel about these men? Read the “wooing scene” aloud, and then switch gender roles with a male reading Lady Anne's lines and a female reading Richard's. Discuss the reactions of the characters and the students' various reactions reading and hearing these lines. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2A5d, 2B4b, 2B4c, 4Ab)**

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8. Using this same scene, have you ever been in a position where someone talked you into doing something you really did not want to do? How did you feel about your decision? Did you feel pressured, scared, intrigued? Looking back, do you wish you would have reacted a different way? If so, why? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 3A)**
9. You're a reporter for the high school paper, and you're covering Henry VI's funeral procession. Suddenly, you see Richard interrupt the scene. Whom would you talk to, to get the scoop on the story? Of all those in attendance, whose perspective would be the most interesting? The most "objective"? The most bitter and indicting? What questions would you ask them? How would they respond? Write up your story. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Cb, 2A5b, 3Bb, 3C4a)**
10. Just *whom* are they all talking to??? One of the challenges in reading a text that was meant for performance is figuring out the speaker's focus of attention: who are they saying what to? And, of course, as in real conversation, that focus can change several times in the middle of a speech if there's a group of people gathered on the stage.
- Deixis* (pronounced "da-ye-sis") is a fancy word for pointing to the person being addressed at any given moment. Taking Margaret's lines (in Act 1 scene 3, beginning with "I was; but I do not find..."), in groups of three, one person read the lines while the other two people in the group (playing Richard and Queen Elizabeth) point to themselves each time you think that Margaret's jab refers to you. It takes careful listening, so be aware! Discuss your solution, then compare it to other groups' work. *(This is a good activity to use in this play whenever it begins to get murky who's being spoken to or about in a particular passage.)* **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B4a, 1Cb, 2Ab, 2Ba, 4Ab)**
11. Dreams and prophesies appear over and over again in *Richard III*. In Act I scene 4, Clarence has a dream foreshadowing his death by drowning. What about your dreams? Are they as exciting as Clarence's? Think about a scary dream/nightmare you had (that you don't mind sharing) and write down everything you remember. Then rewrite your dream like a ghost story. Feel free to embellish to make it more dramatic or scary. Then in pairs share your dream with your partner. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 1B5b, 2B3c, 3A)**
12. Clarence's two murderers in Act 1 scene 4 discuss "conscience" as though it were a living, breathing character. In your small groups, create two separate tableaux (a tableau is a wordless picture created by forming your bodies into a clear and "readable" image for your audience) that picture the "conscience" these two are talking about. Now, discuss the "conscience" as a more positive image, embodied perhaps by a parent, a teacher, minister or a coach, and create a third tableau that visualizes a more positive connotation of the word. Share your images with the rest of the class. As you work through *Richard III*, think about the notion of conscience and the role (present or absent) it plays in this story. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 2Ac, 4Bd)**
13. The various murderers in Shakespeare's plays usually don't have a lot to say or do—except for killing, of course... But in Act 1 scene 4 of *Richard III* the two murderers debate their conscience before killing Richard's brother Clarence. These murderers have more to them than first meets the eye! What do imagine their home life is like? Do they have families? What do they do when they're not murdering people at Richard's command? Take another look at the discussion between the two murderers and then create a back-story for either 1st Murderer or 2nd Murderer. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 2Ab, 2A4d, 3A)**

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16. Richard's monologues are written not unlike journal entries. As you read the play, keep a log of all the times when Richard speaks to his audience. What information do his thoughts reveal? How would the play be different if Richard chose not to share his thoughts and plans with us? Would you have to add a new character? Or create a new scene to communicate the information? Taking one soliloquy, add a scene to *Richard III* that gives us the same information but in another way. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2Ac, 2Bc, 3A, 3Ba)

ACT 2

14. [Shakespeare] places as great a value of the sanctity of personal relations in the History Plays as in the tragedies, because he intuits that order depends, not on concepts of hierarchy and degree, but on the fabric of personal and social relationships which is woven by ties of marriage, kinship, and friendship, by communal interests, and ideals of loyalty and trust...Chaos comes in the History Plays as in the tragedies, not when doctrines of obedience are questioned, but when the most intimate human ties disintegrate...

—Robert Ornstein, 1972

Ornstein's words ring true throughout the tale of *Richard III*, but perhaps no more stridently than when the women and children who are passive victims of the history gather to lament their respective losses. The first of these scenes is in Act 2 scene 2 (beginning with Boy, "Ah, aunt!"). In groups of four, read aloud these lines, each reading to the next period. Repeat, with a different speaker beginning the round. Now, position yourselves dramatically to emphasize what you hear in the dialogue. Does anyone stand near someone else? Will anyone turn away—and if so, at what *specific* moment in the script? Will they all face one another, or could there be other, dramatic choices that help illustrate what you sense in these lines? Don't try to be realistic, but rather imagine the mood here and create a stage picture that dramatizes it. Now, read the lines again, this time each of you speaking the voice of one character throughout. What do you discover? Share your stage image and your ideas with other groups. How do these images vary from scenes of bereavement that you have seen in your own life (or on film or TV)? What do Robert Ornstein's words suggest to you about this society and its story? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 2B3c, 4Ab, 4Bb, 5B4a)



15. Richard may be deformed and crippled, but in the beginning of the play he shows a fair face to almost everyone onstage. He pretends to be sympathetic to his brother Clarence's plight and then remorseful about his death, even though he ordered the murder. Richard only shows his true colors to the audience. Using something as simple as a paper plate or brown paper bag (or as involved as *papier mâché*) create two masks: one of the face that Richard shows to the characters in the play and a second mask of the face he lets his offstage audience see. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 2A5b, 2B4c, 3Cb)
16. If you had to cut an entire scene from Act 2 to make your production of *Richard III* shorter than the three-plus hours it takes to perform the play in its entirety, which scene would you cut? Why? Would anything be lost by the cutting of it? Anything gained? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 2Ab, 4Ab)

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17. Choosing a character other than Richard III, keep a journal to track *another* point of view through the play—a character whose thoughts aren't laid out to us the way Richard's are in his soliloquies. Follow that character's journey through the play. Note his/her perceptions and/or reactions to events or people he/she comes in contact with. Later, you can take all that information you've gathered and write a soliloquy based on his/her very different perspective about the events of this story. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 2Aa, 2Ac, 2B4c, 3A)



ACT 3

18. Buckingham: *Now my lord, what shall we do if we perceive
Lord Hastings will not yield to our complots?*

Richard: *Chop off his head...* (3.1.191-93)

What images or associations do you make with the line, “Chop off his head”? Is this a tragic moment or a comic one? Do you think that Richard's line *could* have played for humor to Shakespeare's audience when decapitation was still a horrific reality? What are our current attitudes regarding violence (real or simulated) on TV or in the movies? Have we become numb to the violence we see on screen? Try several ways of saying these lines between Buckingham and Richard. What if Buckingham and Richard are equally strong and violent? What if Buckingham is a downright wimp? If Richard laughs his own comment off as he delivers it? What are other possibilities? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5d, 1Cb, 2Ba, 2B3c)

19. As a class, discuss the issue of “loyalty.” What does it mean to be “loyal”? How is the word used in the play? Who is on Richard's side and who is against him? Make a list as you go through the play, making arrows from one side to the other as people's allegiances switch. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1Cf, 4Ab, 4Bb)

20. There are many lines in *Richard III* that cause us to question the sincerity of the speaker. Even when Richard is at his seemingly most earnest, his real intentions are revealed the moment he is alone. Identifying and understanding the “subtext” (what's in a character's thoughts but isn't voiced directly) is especially important with this play.

One way of exploring what the character is really thinking is to work on the dialogue in pairs. For each character in a scene, assign two speakers: after one person delivers the line/s as written, the second gives an account of what that character is *really* thinking at that moment. The effectiveness of this activity can be enhanced by seating the line-speaking characters opposite one another while their alter egos stand behind them. Here are a couple of good scenes to start with (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 2B4c, 3A, 4Ac):

- ◆ Act 3 scene 1, lines 95-150
- ◆ Act 3 scene 7, lines 194-246

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21. Now that you're halfway through the play and have gotten to know the characters of *Richard III* better, play character Password! Divide the class into teams and write the names in the *Dramatis Personae* on slips of paper. Take turns drawing a character name and giving your classmates clues about your identity while they have to guess at it, but no gesturing and no using *any* character names, or position titles like “Lady,” “King,” “Queen,” or “Duke.” Need a tie-breaker or up for a real challenge? Try to get your team to guess your character with a one-word, no-gesture clue. Choose your word carefully and use every quality of your voice that you can to express that character! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 4A4d)



ACT 4

22. In Act 4 scene 3, a hired assassin, Tyrrel, shares his thoughts on killing the young princes in the Tower of London. For a play so famous for its mass-murders, there is surprisingly little violence on stage. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to tell the audience about the murders rather than showing us? Is it an effective choice? Would you rather have seen Tyrrel's accomplices do the deed or been told about it in a monologue? Which is more shocking or more moving? Why? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 1Ce, 2Aa, 2Ac)
23. The first scene in Act 4 is one of the very few in which the women in the play actually talk to one another. What purpose does this serve in the play? How do Queen Elizabeth, Margaret, Lady Anne feel about their lives? Rework a scene that exists in Shakespeare's play—but from a female perspective. For example, rewrite the Lady Anne wooing scene from the point of view of a female pall-bearer. Or, write a scene in which Lady Anne and Queen Elizabeth get together and discuss Richard's “wooing” abilities. Now imagine that a *woman* had all the physical traits that Richard had, or had his same character. What might her story have been like? In other words, place the shoe on the other foot. What do you come up with? Discuss with your class. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cd, 1Ce, 2Ab, 2B4c, 3A)
24. Shakespeare's language is full of antitheses—words and ideas that are opposite one another. Anne's speech in Act 4 scene 2 is full of them, such as “so **young**, so **old** a widow” or “More miserable by the **life** of thee/ Than thou hast made me by my dear lord's **death**.” Be on the lookout for these as you read the play. In pairs, choose two examples of antitheses. Illustrate each by becoming statues that, as a pair, suggest something about the contradiction. How would you illustrate old and young at the same time? Think about the condition of the characters' lives, and why these paired opposites might turn up again and again in their language. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A5b, 1B5b, 2A5b, 2B5a, 4Ab)

25. *I say again, give out / That Anne my queen is sick and like to die.* —Richard (4.2.57-58)

The murder of Anne is strongly implied, though never explicitly reported. The next thing we know, Richard is courting the *mother* of his next intended, Princess Elizabeth! What exactly happened to Lady Anne? Write a journal entry or a letter from Anne to a confidante about her final days in Richard's Court. *Is* she, in fact, ill? Does she suspect her life is endangered? Compare your solution with the very strong statement made by the Ian McKellen film in which Anne dies from a drug addiction induced by her misery. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 2Ac, 2Ad, 2Bc, 3Ba)

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ACT 5

26. *There is no creature loves me,/ And if I die no soul shall pity me.* —Richard (5.3.200-201)

The singer Tina Turner once asked, “What’s love got to do with it?” What function does love serve in this play? In general, is love important? Is it important for Richard? What do we learn about Richard’s relationship with his mother, the Duchess of York? What words does she use to describe him? Do you think that there is any cause-and-effect between this mother/son relationship and the behavior we see in Richard as a grown man? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A5b, 2Aa, 2Bc)**

27. “Remember Margaret was a Prophetess.” The arrival of All Soul’s Day at the beginning of Act 5 brings about another fulfillment of Margaret’s prophecies. Look back over the play and recall Margaret’s prophecies and what completed them—has all been settled yet? Which prophecies are still hovering in the air as we approach the play’s end? Based on Margaret’s predictions and your own guesswork, predict what you think will happen in the end. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Ca, 1Cd)**

28. The boar, Richard’s heraldic symbol, is used to refer to him throughout the play. In Act 5 scene 2, Richmond, Oxford, Blunt and Herbert use the boar as well as other rich imagery to discuss the terrible effects of Richard’s rule upon England. Make a list of the metaphors, similes and allusions used in this short scene. Pick at least three images you find most effective. Combine these in a newly designed coat of arms that reflects Richard’s legacy according to Shakespeare. By contrast, create a coat of arms that represents the England that Richmond and his men hope to restore. Use the inverse of Richard’s new coat of arms and lines like “True hope is swift, and flies with swallow’s wings” to inspire your design! Remember, too, the heraldic symbols of the Tudor and Stuart roses—how would they figure into each of these men’s coats of arms? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5d, 2Ab, 2Ad, 3Cb, 5C4b)**

29. Working in pairs, write imaginary letters by two young English soldiers the night before the Battle of Bosworth Field—one who serves in Richard’s army, the other in Richmond’s. It was then, as now, common practice for soldiers to write to their mother or their sweethearts the night before battle. Because one will die fighting for Richard III while the other will be killed serving under Richmond, they might (or might not...) express different views of King Richard III. You might begin by finding references in the play that support the opposing allegiances. Have the letter’s recipient write back describing the scene back home. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ab, 2Ad, 3A, 3Ba)**

30. “Fight, gentlemen of England!” Richard and Richmond both give rousing orations to their armies. Though their rallying cries oppose one another, their arguments are similar. Inter-cut Richard and Richmond’s Act 5 scene 3 orations to their soldiers. The similarity of these men’s arguments is a good thing to note as you begin to splice these speeches together. What does each leader ask his men to remember? How does he describe his rival? What do they say about land / country, wives, and children? What is their final word or rallying cry? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Ba, 1Cc, 2Ad, 3A)**

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31. Forget the pep rally—have a class competition of Shakespearean rallying cries! Divide the class in two. Give one half of the class Richard’s oration and the other half Richmond’s. Distribute the lines amongst each “army,” and decide which lines your army will say altogether, or where you might want to include call and response (eg, “Shall these enjoy our lands?” “NO!”). Practice in your group, and then meet each other on the field of battle. A “conductor” indicates with the wave of a baton or a bell when each side switches off. (For high drama: switch when the language of the two men echoes one another.) It’s time to intimidate your rival and rally the troops – “Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!” **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Cd, 3Ba, 4Ac, 4Bb)**
32. Create chapter titles for each portion of Act 5 scene 3 that can apply to both Richard and Richmond. Shakespeare’s stage directions already give you a hint of one—“His oration to his soldiers.” How would you title the others? How can it fit Richard and Richmond equally in one title? Or, once you create titles that can apply to both, how would you change them for each man to express his distinct style and circumstance? Be creative! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bd, 1Cb, 1Cd)**

AFTER YOU READ THE PLAY

1. The sensational saga of Richard’s bloody path to power would sell a LOT of newspapers! Imagine the modern gossip press existing in Shakespeare’s time, and the events of Richard’s lifetime unfolding as Shakespeare reports it. Act by act, what shocking headline would you as editor-in-chief of “The Shakespearean Mirror” splash across the latest issue? Turn your class into a magazine publishing house and create a tabloid update for each act, or for the play as a whole. You can find examples at the BBC website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_index.shtml. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cd, 2Ab, 2B5b, 3Ca)**
2. While Shakespeare attributes the deed to Richard III, mystery surrounds the real history behind the two murdered princes in the Tower. In fact, there are 10 disputed “suspects” in the case, including Richard! For the facts of the case, see the Royal Shakespeare Company’s website: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/richard/students/princes.html>. For a full listing of the suspects and the case for each, visit <http://r3.org/bookcase/whodunit.html> and read the article by scholar Helen Maurer. In a group, research a suspect who interests you. Share your findings with your class and listen to your classmates argue the guilt of other suspects. Take a vote: who do you think murdered the princes in the Tower? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3Ba, 4Aa, 4Bb, 5Aa, 5Ab, 5Cc)**



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3. “Hasta la vista, baby. I’ll be back.”

“Here’s looking at you, kid.”

“A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...”

What makes a line memorable? Below are some lines from *Richard III* that have endured as familiar, often-repeated quotes to this day. Stage a debate about which line is the most memorable and significant. Locate the quotes in context to support your argument with the importance of the line in the play, explore the line for the language and literary devices that make it stick in your mind, and imagine a few creative examples of moments in our own lives when quoting it would make perfect sense! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 2Ad, 2Ba, 5Cc)

“Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.”

“I am determined to prove a villain.”

“Was ever Woman in this humour wooed?
Was ever Woman in this humour won?”

“Off with his head!”

“Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
devised at first to keep the strong in awe.”

“A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!”

PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE YOU’LL SEE

1. In Shakespeare’s time, the text of a play was intended for the stage and was with each performance a fluid and changing element. Directors of Shakespeare follow in his footsteps when they modify parts of the text in an effort to make the play more understandable to its audiences. One of the main tasks of the director is to “theatricalize” the printed text—that is, to make clear visually what appears on the page. To Director Barbara Gaines, the opening moments of a play are particularly critical to theatricalize effectively, because the audience is not yet used to the world of the play or its language.

You’ll see in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production of *Richard III* that Barbara Gaines introduces us—before any lines are spoken—to the atmosphere and world of the play by creating a scene without words. Before you see her vision, create your own. Imagine that you want to develop a brief, wordless vignette that will help your audience sink into the world of *Richard III* before Shakespeare’s play begins. Create a scene. Who and what would it depict? What background information might be important to convey? What mood? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Ce, 2Ab, 3A)

2. Before you see the characters of *Richard III* brought to life on stage through the vision of a director, spend some time imagining your own version. Then, after you see the play, contrast your vision to that of Director Barbara Gaines and the actors. Take, for example, Richard. Go back to the text and look for clues that suggest what he

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looks like and how he might act. What stars might you see cast in this role? In other key roles in the play? How does Chicago Shakespeare’s interpretation compare to yours? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Ba, 2Ab, 2Bc, 4A4b**)

3. Director Barbara Gaines will open her production of *Richard III* with an “extratextual” scene (in other words, a scene not in Shakespeare’s text), which you’ll see when you visit CST in the coming weeks—the royal family is gathered for a family portrait. Having now read the play, imagine your own family portrait of this dysfunctional clan. In groups of seven, plan your photo. Where does each character stand in relationship to others? How in a still photo can you communicate his/her “subtext”—that is, the thoughts one thinks but doesn’t voice? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ab, 2Ac**)

- ◆ Richard, Duke of Gloucester
- ◆ Clarence, Duke of George
- ◆ King Edward IV
- ◆ Duchess of York
- ◆ Queen Elizabeth
- ◆ The two princes

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM



1. Ian McKellen’s film of *Richard III* makes some unique choices about the use of violence on screen. As a class, discuss which acts of violence the movie depicts that are reported, but not staged in Shakespeare’s script? How does the director’s choice affect the story he tells? After seeing Chicago Shakespeare’s production, compare these choices to those that director Barbara Gaines makes in her staged production. What impact does each have upon the story told? Upon us as the audience? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1Ce, 2Aa, 2Ac**)
2. Working in groups of three, brainstorm your ideas and write an ad for the *Chicago Tribune* about the production you just saw. Remember that you must characterize the play and attract a large audience in just a few words. What visual image from the play would you choose to capture the play’s essence and make a statement about it? Compare your ideas with CST’s *Richard III* ads that appear in the Friday “On the Town” section of the *Tribune*. What are the strengths of each? How do they work differently? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cd, 1Ce, 3C4a**)
3. Think about contemporary movies or TV shows you know. Where have you seen recent examples of a criminal or villain that you are prone to like—despite your best moral judgment? In your group, discuss your examples. What effect does it have on us to like “the bad guy”? Throughout *Richard III*’s stage and cinematic history, Richard has been played from comic vice, to the embodiment of evil, to the psychological outgrowth of

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his deformed body and disturbed infancy. Looking back at Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production, how would you characterize Richard’s personality? Was he portrayed as a human being with qualities we might even share, or as something inhuman and fiendish? Support your position with as many examples as you can remember from the performance! (*If you have a chance to see the Ian McKellen film or the classic Olivier interpretation, compare their interpretations as you approach this question.*) **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 2A5d, 5B4a)**

4. Write a review of the play for the newspaper. Talk about the set, acting, costumes, lights. How did the production made you feel? Include specific moments that were clear or that were particularly strong for you, or other that you didn’t understand. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 1Ce, 3C4a)**
5. Selecting one or two quotes from the list of quotes in the section, “What the Critics Say,” respond to the ideas with your own point of view. Call upon your play-going experience as well as your reading of the text if you’ve studied the play—and be specific about moments in the production and lines in the text that support your view. What is it about this particular quote that strikes a chord? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cc, 1Cd, 1Ce, 5B4a)**
6. Returning now to Shakespeare’s script, choose one line that particularly “speaks” to you—perhaps it’s one that you noticed when you read the play, or perhaps it was one that stood out for you in the live performance. This will be “your” line from *Richard III*. Using it as your catalyst, write about the line and your personal response to it. What is its significance to the character/s in the play? What is its significance to you? If there are any obscure words or phrases in your line, make sure that you wrestle with them. This is a very personal response to some of Shakespeare’s language—there’s no “right” answer! Did hearing the line spoken in any way enhance or change your understanding of the line? If so, in what way? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A, 1Ba, 2Ba, 3A)**
7. A performance of *Richard III* not only brings Shakespeare’s words to life, but interprets the setting and characters’ looks and sounds. Choose a character or scene in *Richard III* to interpret this way yourself. You may think like a theatrical designer or more broadly like an artist. Create an illustration, such as a drawing or collage, of the character or scene of your choice, create a soundtrack to capture it, or both (when the audio and visual accompany each other, it’s called a “montage”). Write a few paragraphs about the interpretive choices you made and why. Put this on a placard that would accompany your piece in a gallery, or go in the program of a concert. Create a class viewing and listening gallery and discuss your peers’ work. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Ce, 3C4b, 4Ab, 5Ba)**



The **Bard Card Program** encourages Team Shakespeare students who first attend Chicago Shakespeare Theater on a field trip to return on their own with friends and family. Bard Card student members may purchase two tickets to each full-length, mainstage show at

\$15 each through our 2009–2010 Season. The two-year membership is designed to bridge the gap between a school trip and a student’s personal life. The program’s mission is to make tickets affordable to students, so they learn how to make Shakespeare and theater a continuing part of their lives.

Students interested in becoming a Bard Card member should email us at bardcard@chicagoshakes.com. Please encourage them to become members!

◆ ————— ◆ TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

Richard III in Performance

<http://shakespeare.emory.edu/playdisplay.cfm?playid=25>

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

Shakespeare in Europe Shine (Basel University)

<http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home>

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)

<http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html>

Sher's Shakespeare Index

<http://www.websher.net/shakespeare/>

BBC1 Web Guide

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webguide/schools/search.shtml?query=Shakespeare>

Absolute Shakespeare

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

**indicates specific focus on Richard III, in addition to other plays*

The Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folger.edu/Content/Teach-and-Learn/Teaching-Resources/>

PBS In Search of Shakespeare

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/>

ShakespeareHigh.com (Amy Ulen's revamped "Surfing with the Bard" site)

<http://www.shakespearehigh.com>

Web English Teacher*

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/richard3.html>

Shake Sphere

<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xShakeSph.html>

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)*

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm>

Spark Notes*

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Resource Center*

<http://bardweb.net/plays/index.html>

SUGGESTED READING

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