

The Tragedy of King Richard III



William Shakespeare

An introduction to Shakespeare's perennially popular *Tragedy of King Richard III*. Provides an outline of the events and leading players in the Wars of the Roses and places Richard in his historical context. Considers Shakespeare's characterization of the King in relation to his sources and the historical evidence. Richard's motives and means are discussed and key scenes are used to promote discussion. Various contemporary concepts inherent in the work are explained and a brief production history of the play in production is provided, with particular focus on actors who have portrayed the eponymous villain.

Shakespeare & the Mediaeval mind

Witchcraft and demonic forces

RICHARD
I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
That do conspire my death with devilish plots
Of damnd witchcraft, and that have prevailed
Upon my body with their hellish charms.

Fortune's Wheel



Prophecy and curses

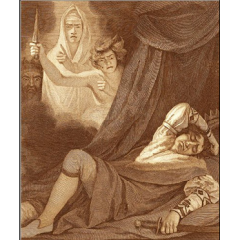


Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses.
Though not by war, by stratagem die your king,
As soon by murder, to make him a king.
[To Queen Elizabeth]
Edward thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,
For Edward our son, that was Prince of Wales,
Die in his youth by like untimely violence.
Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self.
Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's death
And see another, as I see thee now,
Deked in thy rights as thou art stilled in mine.
Long die thy happy days before thy death,
And often many laughless hours of grief,
Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen.
Rivers and Doves, you were standers-by
And so went thou, Lord Hastings, when my son
Was stabbed with bloody daggers. God, I pray him
That none of you may live, his natural age—
But by some unlooked accident cut off.

Judgement of God



Dreams and portents



CLARENCE
I charge you, as you hope to have redemption
By Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins,
That you depart, and lay no hands on me.
The deed you undertake is damnable.

Enter the Ghost of the two young Princes.
GHOSTS *[To Richard]*
Dreams on thy senses smothered in the Tower.
Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard,
And weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death.
Thy nephew's souls bid thee despair and die!

SAMPLE SLIDES

Richard as actor and deceiver

...and frame my face to all occasions



I think there's never a man in Christendom
Can lesser hide his love or hate than he,
For by his face you straight shall know his heart
Lord Hastings, Act 3.4

...much it joys me too
To see you are become so penitent.
Lady Anne, Act 1.2



Alas, why would you heap this care on me?
I am unfit for state and majesty.
I do beseech you take it not amiss,
I cannot nor I will not yield to you.

Richard, Act 3.7



50 Slides & Video 1 or 2x75 Minute sessions