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BIFX-550

Dr. Darby

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Richard II

1. How did the grandeur of the court affect the perception of Richard II by his people?

Clearly it does not have a good impact on their perception. The court is living in the lap of luxury with little concern for the commoners while they are struggling to get by like always. It seems like this makes them despise the king for repurposing all their money to live to lavishly, perhaps somewhat greedy, out of touch, and maybe even effeminate?

1. Richard laments Henry’s “humble and familiar courtesy”, claims Henry gives too much respect to the common people. Example: “Off goes his bonnet to an oyster wench.” How does this influence the way that Henry is viewed by his peers? How about the common people?

I think to his peers, be probably seems jealous of Henry’s popularity with the common people. But the average people probably wouldn’t see it that way. They would likely find him to be a heartless and condescending ruler. This seems to reinforce their already established distain for the court.

1. Richard likes to flaunt his power i.e. he revises Bolingbroke’s sentence from 10 to 6 years as an afterthought. “How long a time lies in one little word. Such is the breath of kings!” Is this a good strategy? Does it make John of Ghent grateful? What impression does it give you about Richard?

It doesn’t seem like a good strategy. It makes the punishment feel rather arbitrary. John of Ghent thanks the king, but is not particularly grateful. Due to his old age, he remains conscious of the fact he will likely pass before his son Bolingbroke returns from exile.

1. What is meant by John of Gaunt’s soliloquy? “This England, this land of such dear souls, this dear dear land is now leased out. I die pronouncing it… Thou diest though I the sicker be. Thy deathbed is no lesser than thy land wherin thou liest in reputation sick. And thou, too careless patient as though art, commits thy anointed body to the cure of those physicians who first wounded thee.  A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown whose compass is no bigger than thy head…. Landlord of England art thou now. Not king.”
   1. Describe what is happening in the play that John of Gaunt is referring to.

John is fondly recalling the land of his birth, England. But this shifts to a tone as he says that things are not the way they used to be, that England needs to be corrected. Once the King appears, he goes on about how the King has a poor reputation due in part to the ill advice of his flattery council. This seems to be the correction he was referring to.

* 1. What outcome does John of Gaunt expect?

Perhaps John wants to help the King see the errors of his ways so that he might yet be set back on the right path. But evidently the King is having none of it.

1. Did Bolingbroke immediately demand abdication of the throne? What was his strategy? In other words, what stops Bolingbroke from just taking the crown and throne once he captures Richard.

No, he asks to be unbanished and get his lands back. He seems at the time content to reclaim what is rightfully his, rather than to spill English blood over attaining something that is not. But this seem to be because lineage and tradition prevents him from taking the crown outright. In the end Richard makes Bolingbroke his heir, is forced to abdicated, and then made to recognize Bolingbroke (Henry IV) as the new and legitimate king.

Henry IV

1. At the end of Richard II, what kind of king did you expect Henry IV to be?  Were you right? Why or why not?

I expected him to be competent and down to earth. He seemed to be in respectful of and in touch with the people. He also led a successful rebellion against Richard. In his old age though, Henry seems to have become more cold and cruel. Like his predecessor, he seems to have a distain for the common people, as evident by the language in his harsh scolding of Hal.

1. Is the fact that Henry (Hotspur) Percy won the war with Scottish rebels good or bad for Henry IV? Why?

It seems like it would be a good thing, but in reality it has only caused problems. First, Percy is not handing over his prisoners and throwing a fit about Mortimer not being rescued. Second, it hoists Percy up as a more competent and active leader than the rightful heir Hal. This, as we shall see later, helps galvanize him to rebellion.

1. Would Henry Percy have made a good king? What kind of leader is he? What motivates him?

He seems passionate and fair, but also impatient and impulsive. It seems like he is probably a task oriented leader motivated by achievement and power. I think it would be hard for him to make a good king due to his impatient and impulsive.

1. What does Hal’s offer to fight Percy one-on-one tell us about him and what kind of leader he will be?

This seems to hint that he will be a thoughtful and merciful ruler that cares for his people, because the alternative is their two armies fighting. Combined with his previous behavior, he is established as a affiliation motivated leader. However, it also shows in the scene that he doesn’t think they will accept the call for 1v1 combat, which perhaps negates the initial inferences.

1. Richard II, Henry IV, and Hal each style themselves very differently and present very different appearances to the outside world. Considering the difference in the levels of formality, luxury, practicality, respectability, etc. How does each man's appearance affect the way that others perceive him?

Richard II had fancy silks lined with gold that seemed to illustrate his fondness for a life of luxury. Henry IV at first was wearing nice suits of proud armor that seemed to contrast significantly with Richard’s clothes. However, when he got old, he was wearing dark and foreboding clothes, helping to illustrate his transformation over time. Hal was often found wearing simple and plain clothes, showing him as down-to-earth and in touch with his populace.