

## Richard III Notes

### Introduction

- Many enjoyed theatre in Elizabethan Era (no costumes, but plenty of props and effects)
- It was actually legal for the audience to throw objects at actors if they were dissatisfied, making it important to keep audience's attention with dances, sword fights, etc.
- There were few female roles/actors, and many women could not attend theatres
- Shakespeare was extremely well educated, but his father lost his money when Shakespeare was 19, which shows in the collinear themes in his plays and tragedies
- Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway because she was with child and had twins (Judith and Hamnet, hence the name of the Shakespearean tragic play Hamlet)
- Many believe he wrote all his plays by himself, and his teachers described him as well-educated and cultured (Greek, Latin, French, Italian)
- Shakespeare's concept of the World Order (Chain of Being) is as follows:
  - God, Angels, King, Animals, Plant, Matter, Underworld
  - King, Noblemen, Middle Class, Poor, Women and Children
- In his plays and the time period, words such as thou, thy and thee were to talk to people below you, while Ye, You, Your was for people above or equal to you
- In the language, double negatives are acceptable, and more/most is used (adjectives)

### Characters

**Richard** - Duke of Gloucester, after King Richard III. Deformed due to scoliosis, central character and seen as a villain. He is evil, corrupt, sadistic, manipulative, and stops at nothing to become king. He is quite smart, using politics and words to move up in the royal house

**Buckingham** - Richard's ally, supports Richard and is extremely ambitious to help him until he breaks his promise of giving Buckingham the earldom of Hereford

**Edward IV** - Richard's older brother, King at start of play, partook in brutal civil war, but wanted to reconcile with other political figures in both the House of York and Lancaster

**Queen Elizabeth** - wife of King Edward and mother of two princes (Edward V, Richard of York) and Young Elizabeth. Viewed as Richard's enemy and has kinsmen Dorset, Rivers, Grey as allies

**Dorset, Rivers, Grey** - allies of Elizabeth. Rivers is her brother, Dorset and Grey are sons from first marriage (Rivers and Grey are killed, Dorset flees)

**Anne** - widow of Prince Edward, son of King Henry VI, and hates Richard, but marries him

**Duchess of York** - Widowed mother of three brothers, mother-in-law to Elizabeth and is protective of Elizabeth and her children, as well as is extremely angry with Richard and his villainous actions

**Queen Margaret** - widow of Henry VI, mother of Prince Edward (dead). She is deposed, hates Richard and everyone else, including Elizabeth, her kinsmen and Buckingham

**Richmond** - Lancaster royal who gathers a force and defeats Richard at Bosworth Field and marries Young Elizabeth instead of Richard, who planned to do the same

**Hastings** - lord who is loyal to King Edward IV, winds up dead for trusting Richard, and is accused of supporting the one who bewitched him

**Stanley** - stepfather of Richmond, earl of Derby, is secretly helping Richmond

**Vaughan** - friend of Elizabeth, executed with Rivers and Grey

## Summary

### Act I

#### Scene I

- Richard explains the political state (Yorks won the civil war against the Lancasters)
- Now there is peace, his brother is being a lover, but b/c he is ugly, he will become a villain
- He explains that he has laid a plot against his brother Clarence by telling King Edward that there is a prophecy saying "G" will kill Edward's sons
- When he sees Clarence under arrest w/ Brakenbury he acts surprised; Clarence says it is b/c his name is George and the king has heard a prophecy about the letter "G"
- Richard says it is Queen Elizabeth who has made the king send Clarence to the Tower; she also had Lord Hastings sent to the Tower in the past (now he is free)
- Richard promises to plead Clarence's case to King Edward but as soon as he leaves, Richard reveals he has no intention of doing so
- Richard meets Hastings, newly liberated, and tells him that Clarence was also arrested by Elizabeth (shared enemy)
- Hastings reveals the king is sick, when he leaves Richard reveals his plan
- He wants Clarence dead so he will further poison the king's mind, then he wishes Edward dead, then he decides to marry Anne (after killing her husband and father)

#### Scene II

- Lady Anne is mourning the corpse of her husband, Henry VI
- She curses the murderer, his future wife and child, to a life of unhappiness and death
- Richard orders the procession to stop, Anne is outraged and insults him
- Richard attempts to soothe Anne through flattery, she continues to insult him
- Richard denies killing her husband and father at first, he blames it on Edward
- Anne calls him out on his lie, he admits it but says her beauty drove him to it
- He offers her his sword and says that if she wishes, she can kill him right there
- She won't do it, he offers to do it himself, but she cannot do it
- He puts his ring on her, she warns that to take is not to give
- Once she is gone, Richard says that he will not keep her long
- He gloats that she had a perfect husband but still agreed to marry him, an eyesore

#### Scene III

- Rivers and Grey try to reassure Queen Elizabeth about her husband
- Elizabeth fears about what will happen should Richard become protector
- Buckingham says that Edward wants to reconcile between Richard and her brothers
- Richard says that Elizabeth and her brothers are wrong to complain about him to Edward
- He says he has never slandered her family,, and accuses them of wanting Edward to die
- Elizabeth only wants peace, Richard accuses her of having arrested Clarence
- Margaret observes this argument; comments on Richard's murder of her husband Henry and son Edward at Tewksbury
- She denounces Richard as a murderer, tells Elizabeth that she has stolen her crown
- The others team up against her
- Margaret curses the following:
  - Elizabeth - outlive her glory, see her husband and children die like Margaret

- Hastings, Rivers, Dorset - early deaths as they were bystanders
- Richard - that his conscience betray him, as do his close friends
- Richard announces he has deceived people into trusting him
- Two murderers enter who are meant to kill Clarence; Richard warns them not to speak to him

#### Scene IV

- Clarence tells Brackenbury about a dream he had where Richard pushed him into an ocean and drowned him “accidentally”
- He then visited the underworld where he saw those whose deaths he had a part in
  - Prince Edward particularly, ( late husband of Anne) who drags him to hell
- Brackenbury has sympathy and agrees to sleep with Clarence
- The hired murderers hand Brackenbury a warrant to get Clarence alone with them
- The murderers show some conscience, but the thought of the reward motivates them
- Clarence wakes and tries to negotiate his own life, asks them to go bring Richard to save him
- The second murderer reveals that Richard hates Clarence, that he ordered his death
- The first murderer stabs Clarence and puts his body in a wine barrel
- The second expresses remorse/regret and wants no part of the reward anymore

### Act II

#### Scene I

- Edward IV tries to get his family to reconcile; sends a letter of pardon to Clarence
- Buckingham and Hastings finally make up with Elizabeth, Rivers, Dorset, Gray
- Richard makes a speech about how he’s sorry for being hostile to everyone
- When Elizabeth innocently asks if Edward will summon Clarence to the castle to forgive him, Richard acts as though she mocks him
- He announces Clarence’s death and puts the guilt on Edward for not forgiving him faster
- Lord Stanley wants Edward to pardon a servant on death row, Edward blasts him for allowing him to arrest his brother in the heat of his anger
- The anger weakens him; he gets sicker and has to be helped to his bed

#### Scene II

- The Duchess of York is comforting Clarence’s children while not telling them of his death
- She laments Richard’s evil, knowing it was him who sent Clarence to die
- Elizabeth enters, mourning the death of Edward - the duchess joins her in her mourning
- The children weep for Clarence, Elizabeth weeps for Edward, the duchess weeps for both
- Rivers and Dorset tell Elizabeth that Prince Edward must now be crowned in London
- Richard and Buckingham agree with this, but decide that they will fetch the prince alone
- Buckingham is later revealed as an ally of Richard and suggests how to isolate the prince

#### Scene III

- Citizens lament the death of King Edward
- One comments on how the prince is too young to be a good king
- They fear what will happen if Richard or the queen’s brothers try and take control
- They see Richard as cunning and power-hungry
- The citizens would rather the prince have no uncles than those locked in a power struggle

#### Scene IV

- The cardinal (ally of Elizabeth) says that the prince is close to arrival
- Marquis of Dorset announces that Elizabeth's kinsmen, Rivers and Gray, have been arrested along with an ally of theirs named Sir Thomas Vaughan
- They have been sent by Richard and Buckingham to Pomfret Castle where traitors are killed
- Elizabeth sees this as an attack on her family and takes her youngest son away to safety

### Act III

#### Scene I

- The prince arrives in London; demands of Richard what has become of his mother's family
- Lord Hastings announces that Elizabeth and the duke of York have taken sanctuary
- Buckingham asks the cardinal to go retrieve the boy by force if Elizabeth will not give him up
- Cardinal (after protesting) goes with Lord Hastings to do so
- Richard reveals that both Edward and his little brother will be in the Tower until the coronation (both princes don't like that)
- Richard confers privately with Buckingham and Catesby to see if Hastings and Stanley can be recruited
- While Lord Hastings hates Elizabeth and family, he is loyal to Edward IV and would not want to take the throne from the rightful prince
- Lord Stanley will follow what Hastings does
- They decide to have two councils the next day - one to figure out who will support Richard's claim to the throne, and the other to pretend to discuss Edward's coronation
- Catesby is sent to figure out Hastings' alliances (he is to reveal the execution of aforementioned prisoners)
- If Hastings does not comply he will be executed
- Richard promises Buckingham the earldom of Hereford

#### Scene II

- At midnight Lord Stanley sends a message to Hastings saying that he has learned of the "divided counsels"
- Stanley has a dream where a boar razes his helm (Richard cuts off his head)
- Stanley fears for his and Hastings' safety, but Hastings dismisses his fears
- Catesby speaks with Hastings and Hastings does not want Richard on the throne
- Hastings goes to the council thinking that the execution of his enemies means that he is in Richard's favour but does not realize he is soon to be killed

#### Scene III

- Escorted by Sir Richard Ratcliffe, Rivers, Gray, and Sir Thomas Vaughan head to their deaths
- Rivers tells Ratcliffe their executions are unfair, but Gray recalls Margaret's curse
- Rivers reminds Gray that Margaret also cursed Richard and his allies
- He wishes that those curses are fulfilled save for the one on Elizabeth and her sons

#### Scene IV

- Hastings arrives at the council the following day and asks the cause of the meeting
- Derby confirms that the meeting is to set a coronation date

- Richard is in a good mood until Buckingham says that Hastings is not with their cause
- Richard then says that Queen Elizabeth and Hastings' mistress Shore conspired to have his arm deformed and has him arrested for treason
- Hastings realizes that Stanley was right; he laments that no one can stop Richard

#### Scene V

- Buckingham and Richard know that the court is under their control since Elizabeth's relatives and Hastings are dead
- They have to manipulate the people of England
- They first need to convince the mayor of London that Hastings was a traitor
- When the mayor and Catesby enter the castle, Buckingham says that Hastings was a traitor who conspired to kill him and Richard
- The mayor buys it and says he will spread it to the people
- Richard then tells Buckingham to make speeches that implies that the princes are illegitimate
- Then the people will want Richard to be king instead
- Richard then goes to make more allies and ensure the disposal of Clarence's children

#### Scene VI

- A scrivener has just finished copying something onto a piece of paper announcing that Hastings is a traitor
- It will be read to all of London later in the day
- He condemns the hypocrisy of the world as he can tell that this is Richard's fabrication

#### Scene VII

- Buckingham reports that his speech was received badly by the commoners
- They stared at him in terrified silence and only Buckingham's own men cheered for King Richard
- Richard is angry that no one likes him but Buckingham decides to carry on by making the mayor endorse Richard, "offering" him the crown
- Richard will pretend to consider the offer of the crown before taking it
- They carry out the plot; Richard pretends to spend some time in prayer considering it
- Buckingham pretends to plead Richard to take the crown, Richard consents

### Act IV

#### Scene I

- Outside the Tower of London, Elizabeth, Dorset, the duchess of York, Lady Anne, and Clarence's daughter meet to see the princes
- Richard has forbidden visitors
- Stanley arrives and says Richard is about to be crowned king, Anne must go too
- Anne fears that this will mean ruin for England; her curses have come true as she is the deeply unhappy woman she said would become Richard's wife
- The duchess tells Dorset to go and join the Duke of Richmond who has a claim to the throne

#### Scene II

- The newly crowned Richard confides in Buckingham that he still does not feel secure

- He wants the two princes murdered, Buckingham is uneasy and Richard feels that he has grown weak and summons lowlife Tyrrell to do the murders for him
- He orders Catesby to spread rumours that his wife Anne is sick, while also intending to marry Elizabeth and the late king's daughter, (also Elizabeth) which implicates he is going to kill Anne

### Scene III.

- Tyrrell confirms the murders are done, but himself and the other two men are shaken up
- Richard is delighted and rewards him, then explains how he has eliminated threats:
  - Princes are dead
  - Clarence's daughter is married to an insignificant man
  - Clarence's son is imprisoned
  - Anne is dead
- His next step is to marry Elizabeth's daughter to cement his claim on the throne
- Ratcliffe then comes and says that some noblemen are fleeing to France to join Richmond
- Buckingham has revolted and is now in Wales leading an army against Richard
- Richard decides to go to war

### Scene IV

- Elizabeth and the duchess are lamenting the deaths of the princes
- Margaret comes in gloating that her curses came true, that Richard is unstoppable
- She says the recent York deaths are a fitting payment
- Elizabeth wants to know how to curse, Margaret advises her to experience pain
- Margaret leaves for France
- When Richard enters, his mother curses him angrily, and despite Richard's attempts to drown her out, she curses him to a bloody death
- Richard then proposes his marriage idea to Elizabeth who is horrified, but eventually relents and agrees to speak to her daughter
- Richard receives bad reports on Richmond's invasion
- Noblemen have taken up arms against him
- Buckingham's army has been dispersed, he himself has been captured
- Richmond lands his ship, Richard goes out to meet him in combat

### Scene V

- Stanley meets with Richmond's men for a secret meeting
- Richard has taken his son for a hostage to prevent Stanley from deserting
- Stanley sends his regards to Richmond and says Elizabeth wants him to marry her daughter
- The other noblemen give Stanley information about Richmond's forces

## Act V

### Scene I

- Buckingham is taken to his execution where he recalls Margaret's curse
- His request to speak to Richard is denied
- He recalls his promise to take care of Edward's children, his promise to serve Richard, and realizes he deserves what he got

### Scene II

- Richmond tells his camp that Stanley has sent a letter regarding Richard's movements
- Richard's army is but a day's march away; they recall his evils and tyranny
- Richard's allies are there out of fear and not loyalty

### Scene III

- Richard has his men pitch tents for the night; the battle is the next day
- Richard's attempts to encourage the men fall flat
- He learns that he has 3 times the men that Richmond does and thinks he will win

### Scene IV

- Richmond tells a messenger to deliver a letter to Stanley
- Stanley must fight for Richard, but Richmond hopes to get help from Stanley regardless

### Scene V

- Richard suspects Stanley's allegiance shift and tells him to bring his troops or his son dies
- Stanley secretly visits Richmond to explain the situation
- As Richard sleeps, eleven ghosts of the people he killed come to condemn him
- All eleven ghosts endorse Richmond's victory and tells Richard to "Despair and die!"
  - Ghosts: Prince Edward, the dead son of Henry VI; King Henry VI himself; Richard's brother Clarence; Rivers, Gray, and Vaughan; the two young princes, whom Richard had murdered in the tower; Hastings; Lady Anne, Richard's former wife; and, Buckingham
- Richard wakes, his conscience inspiring fear and self-doubt within him
- Ratcliffe alerts him it is time to fight, Richard shares his fears, Ratcliffe dismisses them
- Richmond tells his advisors of his dreams, full of good omens
- He gives the people an inspirational oration and they go to battle in good spirits

### Scene VI

- Richard gives a speech to his people, mainly trash-talking the opposition
- A messenger comes and says that Stanley has mutinied, there is no time to execute his son as battle presses closer

### Scene VII

- Catesby calls for help as Richard's horse has been slain and he has gone mad, challenging everyone in an attempt to find Richmond
- Richard calls for a horse, but refuses to back down
- He has slain five decoy Richmond's that were planted, he continues to pursue the real one

### Scene VIII

- Richmond and Richard duel, Richard loses
- Stanley presents Richmond with the crown from Richard's fallen body
- Few noblemen are dead, Stanley's son lives, Richard's soldiers are granted amnesty, and the dead are buried
- Richmond announces he will marry the daughter of Elizabeth, unite the Lancasters and Yorks, and end the blood feud
- He asks that God bless the marriage and England, the play ends