

Examine the ways in which Richard and Bolingbroke are contrasted in the opening acts of the play

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Shakespeare contrasts Richard and Bolingbroke through their personalities; although in different ways. One interpretation is that they are contrasted through speech. Two other interpretations that will be examined are the character's interactions/attitudes with *common people* and the way in which setting distinguishes the characters.

In Act 1 Scene 1, Richard and Bolingbroke are contrasted through their speech. Bolingbroke speaks in a direct and concise manner exclaiming, "Look what I speak, my life shall prove it true: That Mowbray hath...". Whereas, Richard's speech is more poetic, "In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire". Bolingbroke's use of imperatives "look, prove" and the modal/auxiliary verbs "shall/hath" encapsulate his concise way of speaking. Moreover this captures the idea that Bolingbroke is a man of few words but significant action as he omits elaborate poetry when accusing Mowbray of his crimes. Whereas, Richard's use of poetry establishes contrast through power. The imagery of a powerful "sea" and "fire" is Richard's summary of Bolingbroke and Mowbray - that they are hot-tempered thus unwilling to reason. Therefore it can be concluded, Richard's poetic use of language suggests he has more power than Bolingbroke as it suggests control and calmness whereas Bolingbroke's speech appears more rash. Moreover, the difference in power between Bolingbroke and Richard is further contrasted through speech. Richard is wanting to "purge this choler without letting blood" which ties into the concept of diplomacy, suggesting as Richard is King he has the power to resolve the feud between Bolingbroke and Mowbray. Whereas when Bolingbroke says, "My life shall prove it true" the noun "life" captures the severity of Bolingbroke's predicament, yet also captures the concept of medieval honour. Ultimately suggesting that Bolingbroke is willing to die for his honour, his speech captures him as a man of action - upholding medieval values whereas Richard's use of poetry and chanting, "Forgive, forgive" may capture him as diplomatic yet less aggressive.

In Act 1 Scene 4, contrast can also be examined via Richard and Bolingbroke's interactions/attitudes with the *common people*. Richard accounts how Bolingbroke "observed his courtship to the common people" and "[dove] into their hearts with humble and familiar courtesy". The imagery of Bolingbroke "diving" into "hearts" with "familiar courtesy" suggests that although not King, he is devoted and cordial to commoners. However Richard's attitudes towards commoners suggest he is more distant towards his own people, what reverence he did throw away on slaves" and "off goes his bonnet to an oyster wench

Perhaps contrast suggest that Bolingbroke is more in touch, "familiar"

heart, with "familiar courtesy" suggests that Bolingbroke is in touch with the common people. However, Richard's attitudes towards Bolingbroke's action and the people themselves suggest he is more distant towards his people.

Richard accounts of how Bullingbrooke, "Observed his courtship to the common people" (4.1). Richards dismissal of this suggests that he views his own subjects as inferior and not worth spending time with, whereas Bullingbrooke is. Richard ultimately believes that his own subjects as slaves. Wastes his courtesy

familiar

suggests that