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RICHARD III

PLAY GUIDE

- 2** Chronology of the Reign of Early Kings of England
- 3** Key Characters in Shakespeare's Richard III
- 4** Finding the Real Richard III

- 5** Rewriting History
- 6-7** The Language of Richard III

- 8-9** Shakespeare's Villains

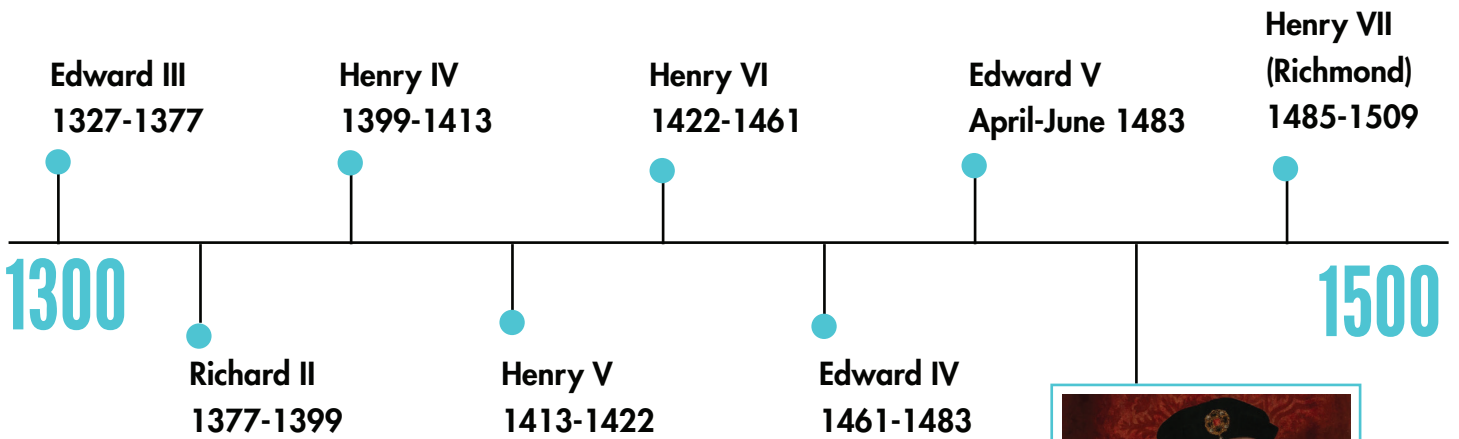
- 10-11** Fate, Deformity...and the Supernatural

- 12** For Further Explorations

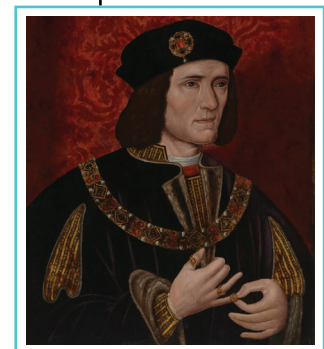


Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the Lady Anne
 Artist: Edwin Austin Abbey (American, 1852–1911, M.A. (Hon.) 1897)

Chronology of the Reign of Early Kings of England



Richard III
 1483-1485



King Richard III by Unknown Artist - National Portrait Gallery

Key Characters in Shakespeare's Richard III

King Edward IV is the same as the King Edward of Henry VI, Part Three, who won his throne by battle. He is much older now, and very ill. He is incurably optimistic and hopes to be able to reconcile all of the warring factions of his court, but at the same time is suspicious and superstitious enough to imprison his brother Clarence because of a prophesy. He is the brother of George (Clarence) and Richard (Gloucester) and father of the two young princes, Edward and Richard.

Edward, prince of Wales: A young prince and the eldest son of King Edward IV. As the heir to the throne, he is king for a short time after his father dies.

Richard, duke of York: The youngest son of King Edward IV and second in line to the throne. Another young prince.

George, duke of Clarence: Brother to King Edward and to Richard, he is third in line to the throne. He is referred to generally as Duke of Clarence or simply Clarence.

Richard, duke of Gloucester: Brother to King Edward and to George (Clarence), he is crowned as Richard III, only to be overthrown by Richmond at the end of the play. He is referred to generally as the duke of Gloucester or simply Gloucester.

Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond: A Lancastrian, he has a claim to the throne and becomes the focal point of resistance to Richard, offering refuge to all those who flee England in fear as Richard's regime takes over. At the end of the play is crowned King Henry VII. He proposes to marry Elizabeth, daughter of King Edward, thus uniting the two warring households: the Yorkists (white rose) and the Lancastrians (red rose).

Henry, duke of Buckingham: Born a Lancastrian but raised (his father died in battle) by King Edward to be a Yorkist. Buckingham is Richard's closest ally as he maneuvers himself onto the throne.

William, Lord Hastings: A supporter of King Edward, he is a loyal subject and a strong supporter of legitimacy, preferring to see the rightful heir on the throne however young and even if it means bringing Queen Elizabeth's family to power.

Lord Stanley, earl of Derby: An opportunist, he jumps from side to side as he sees it will do him good. Though he appears to support Richard, he works against him as much as he can, including by helping Dorset to escape. Richard takes his son George as a hostage when Richmond attacks, so Stanley waits until the last possible moment before betraying Richard. He takes it upon himself to crown Richmond as King.

Sir Richard Ratcliffe: One of Richard's chief supporters, and his major executioner at the time of his coup. He takes care of the deaths of Rivers, Grey and Hastings. He is one of Richard's close attendants on the eve of the battle of Bosworth.

Sir William Catesby: A close supporter of Richard, he follows him to the battle of Bosworth and attempts to help him to flee when it becomes clear that all is lost, only to see his offer refused.

Queen Margaret: The widow of King Henry VI, the same character as the Queen Margaret of the Henry VI plays. Though exiled, she returns to England to witness the destruction of her enemies. She is the mother of Edward, the Elder Prince of Wales. This Edward is the prince that Richard of Gloucester kills off-stage before the play begins. She has no other children.

Queen Elizabeth: The wife of King Edward, the Lady Gray of Henry VI, Part Three. A penniless widow with children when she married the King, she is hated by most of the old nobility for her rise to power. Her brother Rivers is executed, along with her son by a previous marriage, Gray; she urges her last remaining son, Dorset, to flee. Although Richard proposes to marry her daughter, she ends up marrying Richmond.

Duchess of York: The Duchess is the mother of King Edward, Clarence, and Richard, and the widow of the Duke of York of the three Henry VI plays. She has lost many of her own family members, and ultimately curses her third son.

Lady Anne Neville: She is the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, historically referenced as the "Kingmaker." She is the widow of Prince Edward of Lancaster, whom Richard helped kill, and the sole mourner for her father-in-law, King Henry VI, whom Richard also killed.



Jo Appleby examines Richard III's skull.
<https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii>

Finding the Real Richard III

In August 2012, the University of Leicester, in collaboration with the Richard III Society and Leicester City Council, began a search for the lost grave of King Richard III, the last English king to die in battle. That battle and Richard's death was in 1485.

The excavation uncovered a battle-scarred skeleton with spinal curvature, and on 4th February 2013, the University announced to the world's press that these indeed were the remains of King Richard III. Ironically, these remains were found under a car park space on which was painted a giant letter "R". That space, we suppose, was reserved for the infamous king himself.

- ▶ Check out the University of Leicester's Richard III site to learn more.

<https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii>

Rewriting History

Shakespeare wrote several works that dramatize significant events in English history. This type of play, originally called a “chronicle play” and now called a “history play,” was popular in Elizabethan England. Shakespeare intended for these plays to be good theatre— condensing and simplifying events, ignoring chronology and altering characters’ actions and ages to tell a compelling story. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare also intended to write a play to glorify the Tudor dynasty, as Queen Elizabeth’s grandfather was Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, the conqueror at the end of the play. By portraying Richard as a hunch-backed villain and Richmond as a valiant rescuer, Shakespeare validated Queen Elizabeth’s reign, and also created a fictionalized picture of history that has remained through the modern day. Looking back at Shakespeare’s historical sources, we can see how history has been written, revised and fictionalized throughout the ages.

Shakespeare’s main source for the historical events in *Richard III* was *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* by Raphael Holinshed. Published in 1587, Holinshed’s *Chronicles* contained maps of England, Scotland and Ireland and the history of each region, recorded from prehistoric legends through the 16th century. Much of Holinshed’s information came from previous historians, including Polydore Vergil. When Henry Tudor was crowned King Henry VII in 1485, he commissioned Polydore Vergil to write a history of the English monarchy.

The book, *Anglica Historia*, was meant to reaffirm Henry VII’s claim to the throne. It portrayed Henry Bolingbroke’s



The Rival Richards, or Shakespear [sic] in Danger. Political cartoon of Edmund Kean and Charles Mayne Young, both dressed as Richard III, struggling for Shakespeare, who stands between them, crying “Murder! Murder!” Published in London, 1814.

“Richard, the third son, of whom we now entreat, 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 birth ever forward.”

—Sir Thomas More’s *The History of King Richard the Thirde*, 1543.

usurpation of Richard II’s crown as the source for warring and strife, and claimed that the restoration of peace resulted from Henry Tudor’s rise to power. The history perpetuated other rumors like Richard III’s physical deformity.

Shakespeare also found inspiration for the character of Richard III in Sir Thomas More’s book *The History of King Richard the Thirde*, published in 1543. Thomas More grew up in the household of John Morton, Bishop of Ely, who was imprisoned by Richard III during his reign. While More’s account is intended to be factual, he exaggerated details about Richard’s deformity, creating a monstrous picture of a murderer that Shakespeare then solidified into the delicious villain that Richard is thought of today.

Shakespeare’s depiction of Richard was not only aesthetic but also political. When Richard III debuted in the early 1590s, Queen Elizabeth was more than 60 years old and had no children, and therefore no heir to the throne. History told Elizabethans that this could cause terrible civil wars, as rival lords made claims to the throne after the death of the monarch. Shakespeare, writing and performing under the favor of the Queen, created a play that kept public opinion in support of continuing the Tudor monarchy. Richard III also had a warning for anyone who considered taking the crown from the Tudors after Elizabeth’s death: usurpation is a dangerous, and ultimately deadly, business.

Shakespeare crafted his play and the title character so well it is often mistakenly considered a factual portrayal of people and events. His account of history has led to continual debate around the “villainy” of Richard. Did he order the execution of his brother the Duke of Clarence? Was Richard directly responsible for the deaths of the princes in the Tower of London? How, if at all, was Richard physically deformed? Shakespeare made choices writing his portrayal of Richard and the final years of the Wars of the Roses, penning a character audiences love to hate. Through the creative manipulation of English history, Shakespeare created a “mirror” for Elizabethans to revisit their past in light of its contemporary relevance.

The Language of Richard III

As a student at Stratford Grammar School, young William Shakespeare learned how to read and write through the art of rhetoric. An ancient approach to communication dating back to the Greeks, rhetoric was a style of writing that placed the same importance on both what was said and how it was said, giving equal weight to content and form. In his first three plays, the *Henry VI* trilogy, Shakespeare wrote almost entirely within the strict rules of rhetoric, communicating a clear story of the Wars of the Roses, but without creating any truly original or well-rounded character development. When he wrote *Richard III*, however, Shakespeare began surpassing the rules of rhetoric by filling his writing with imagery that conveyed the individual experiences of each character.

Written early in Shakespeare's career (around 1592-3), *Richard III* is written almost entirely in regular verse, without the prose and broken verse seen in his later plays. Unlike the earlier *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, the characters in *Richard III* often speak directly to the audience and use language that conveys their individual experiences, showing Shakespeare's growth as a writer. At the beginning of the play, Richard communicates through traditional rhetoric. Shakespeare uses the repetition of the same words at the beginning of each line to logically set up for the audience Richard's bitter description of the world that he despises:

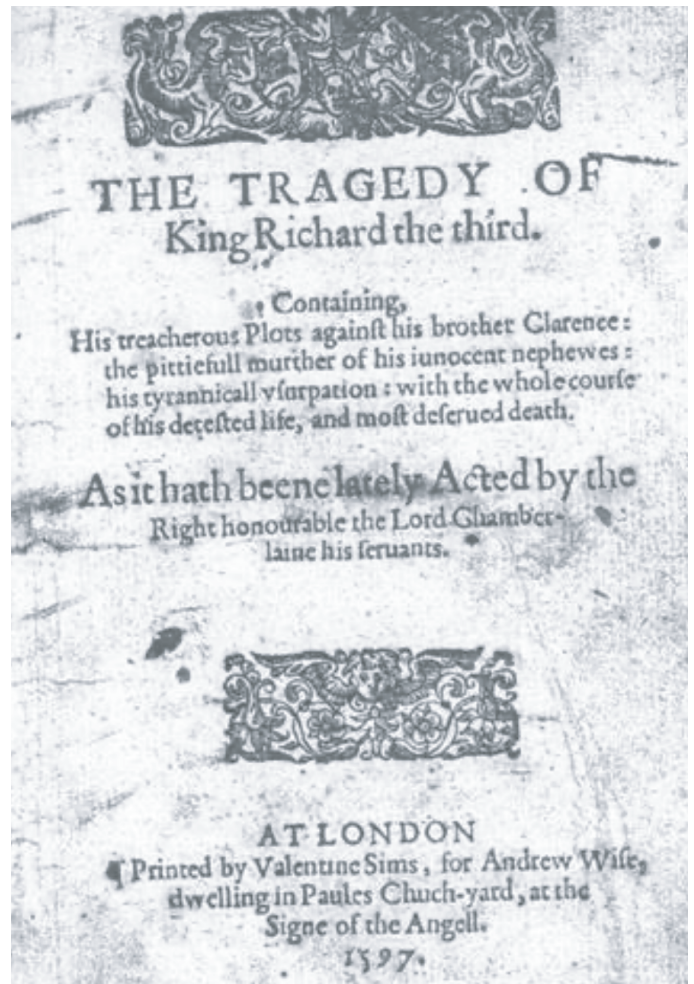
**Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.**

i.i.4-8

Shakespeare also uses clear antitheses, or opposites, to show the difference between the time of war and the time of peace (i.e. "dreadful marches" and "delightful measures"). A few verse lines later, however, Richard focuses on himself, and his language shifts, pushing beyond the structure and formality of traditional rhetoric, communicating a clear self-hatred through the negative physical images of himself.

**I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them**

i.i.18-23



Title page of Richard III from the First Quarto, 1597.

Rhetoric—the art of language composition; the study of writing or speaking

Verse—text written with a meter or rhythm

Prose—text, speech or writing without meter or rhythm

Antithesis—words or phrases with opposite meaning balanced against each other

This also sets up the animal imagery that will continue through the play. Richard gives us the image of dogs barking at his deformed body as he limps by; throughout the play, language referring to Richard is rich with images of grotesque beasts. In act 1, scene 2, Lady Anne refers to Richard as a “hedgehog,” and in act 1 scene 3 Queen Margaret calls him a “poisonous bunchback’d toad” and goes on to call him an “elvish-mark’d, abortive, rooting hog.” In fact, several characters refer to Richard as “the boar” because his coat of arms was a white boar with golden tusks. The continual reference to beasts is intended to illuminate Richard’s true nature.

Richard’s foul deeds eventually unleash nightmares that return to haunt him, cursing him with self-doubt and fear. In a nightmare the evening before his final battle, ghosts of those Richard has killed come back to haunt him. Immediately following the dream, Richard awakes and expresses his newfound self-doubt in the most broken and unconventional language of the play. Still partially relying on a rhetorical device by repeating the same word at the end of several lines, Shakespeare drives Richard toward a powerful realization by repeating “myself”:



Laurence Olivier as Richard and Ralph Richardson as Buckingham in Olivier’s 1955 film, *Richard III*.



Portrait of Richard Mansfield as Richard III, 1855.

**What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why—
lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself!**

V.iii.182-190

The short, broken sentences in this passage convey the twists and turns of Richard’s mind as he struggles with his own guilt. With his famous last line, “A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!” Richard almost echoes the first line of his dream the night before, “Give me another horse!,” providing audiences insight that he’s both haunted and changed by his dream. By the end of the battle, and the play, Richard’s self-doubt and loathing lead to his defeat and death.

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare plays with the rules of rhetoric to create his first fully realized characters, utilizing the most compelling imagery thus far in his career.

Shakespeare's Villains



Ian McKellan in
Richard III (1995)

**And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.**

—Richard III, I.i.28-31

Medieval Mystery Plays; developed in 15th-century England, these plays used allegorical characters and simple plots to teach audiences a specific moral lesson. Characters such as Knowledge, Strength and Good Deeds would share the stage with the Devil, Death and Vice. Often, the two groups would battle for possession of a man's soul. The symbolic characters were not meant to be people; rather they were physical representations of different virtues and sins. The characters and plot were constructed very simply so that the lesson of the play would be clear to the audience. Evil characters would have comic scenes to entertain the audience as well.

The full title of Shakespeare's play is *The Tragedy of Richard III*. Traditionally, a tragedy is defined as the story of a noble hero brought to ruin by a tragic flaw. The protagonist of *Richard III*, however, is through-and-through a villain. Richard has no noble qualities to make him a hero by any standard, and his ruin is well-deserved. But despite his wickedness, Richard has continued to delight and enthrall audiences for four centuries. Even in *Richard III*, one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, he is able to create a full-bodied villain, thoroughly evil but also thoroughly human.

Writing a play with a villain as the main character was not Shakespeare's innovation. The device was common on the Elizabethan stage and had been made popular by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, in his plays *The Jew of Malta* (1589), about a Jewish merchant bent on revenge, and *Tamburlaine* (1587), which follows the victories of a merciless conqueror. Shakespeare could hardly ignore a trend that was popular on the stage at the time. The history of villainous characters can also be traced back to

Shakespeare would certainly have seen morality plays in some form as he was growing up, and they would have an influence on his later work. The character of Vice in particular is evoked in some of Shakespeare's villains, especially those like Richard III, who scheme to bring about the downfall of others without remorse. Richard III was the earliest of Shakespeare's vice characters, who include Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* (1593), Iago in *Othello* (1604), Claudius in *Hamlet* (1601) and the Macbeths in *Macbeth* (1605). In creating these characters, however, Shakespeare moves far beyond the one-dimensional Vice character of the Medieval Mystery Plays, and even beyond the less sophisticated villain characters of his contemporaries. Shakespeare creates villains who are horrifically evil, but at the same time charmingly fascinating and even sympathetically human—the kind of characters that actors love to play and audiences love to watch.

Richard is a great example of this kind of character. He begins the play by directly addressing the audience to declare his wicked intentions. "Plots I have laid," he says, sharing his secret schemes. In this way, Richard invites the audience to watch with morbid fascination as everything falls out as he has planned. Richard never lies to the audience, and therefore they feel as though they are "in on" his secrets and plans. In addition, Richard is capable of showing many different faces. He is undoubtedly charming—in the first few scenes the audience watches him plot Clarence's death, and then immediately change faces and assure his brother that he will release him from prison. Then the audience watches him woo and win Lady Anne, despite the fact that he has murdered her father-in-law and husband. He then instantly rejoices in the fact that he will dispose of her shortly. Richard directly addresses the audience, sharing his joys and anger. The audience may be horrified by Richard's actions, but they delight in watching him manipulate those around him.

Shakespeare creates Richard with a degree of humanity. Because he cannot "prove a lover" and enjoy the time of peace due to his deformity, Richard decides that he will "prove a villain" and seek power for himself. In this way, Shakespeare gives Richard a motivation for his villainy. Unlike the typical Medieval Vice characters, Richard is a believable character, not a personification of evil. Richard may be the ultimate arch-villain. He is also a credible, three-dimensional human being who, because of his deformity, lashes out at the world.

In his later plays, Shakespeare continued to create charming and deeply human villains. These characters often address the audience directly, like Richard, sharing and delighting in their sins. Aaron the Moor, in *Titus Andronicus*, is another who plots the downfall of every major character in the play. While Aaron never states a motive for his villainy, besides the delight he gets from causing woe, he exhibits moments of humanity when he must protect his illegitimate infant from murder, showing a fierce family love. In *Othello*, Shakespeare creates what many consider his greatest villain, Iago. Iago cleverly orchestrates the destruction of those who trust him the most, Othello and Desdemona. Stating his motivation only as jealousy (he was passed over for a promotion and suspects that his wife has been unfaithful with Othello), Iago achieves his dastardly ambitions not through direct violence, but through deception, relishing his ability to manipulate those around him.

In some of his later plays, Shakespeare's villains begin to show another human quality—remorse. In *Hamlet*, Claudius

regrets his crime halfway through the play and prays for forgiveness for the murder of King Hamlet. In *Macbeth*, the main characters do not plot from the beginning to overthrow the king and commit murder; Macbeth and Lady Macbeth merely become victims of fate and their own ambition. While Lady Macbeth seems to be the stronger Vice character at the beginning of the play, urging Macbeth to murder the king when he hesitates to do so, even she cannot endure the burden of guilt and goes mad by the end of the play. Shakespeare's later villains are less evil than misguided, showing a deeper complexity of character and tendency toward self-reflection that Shakespeare developed later in his writing. As Shakespeare's first villain, Richard III continues to delight and horrify audiences with his machinations. Actors love to play the role, as Richard is always changing, improvising and using his charm to get ahead. It is no wonder that *Richard III* is still one of Shakespeare's most popular plays.



James Newcomb as Richard and Suzanne Irving as Elizabeth in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2005 production of *Richard III*.

Fate, Deformity... and the Supernatural

In Shakespeare's time, many people believed that fate was determined not by a person's actions and decisions, but by a number of outside forces, both natural and supernatural. The concept of free will was not widely accepted when Shakespeare wrote his plays; most Elizabethans believed in predestination, the idea that God has pre-planned every event that will happen for all time. Shakespeare's characters often encounter a fate that is a result of the influence of external forces—the alignment of the planets, social status or even personal appearance. An Elizabethan audience would have understood that Richard's physical appearance and the many instances of supernatural intervention in the play contributed to his demise. There was a delicate balance between Christian beliefs and pagan superstitions in the 16th century. While the agents of Richard's fate include curses and ghosts, which modern audiences might associate with witchcraft and black magic, Elizabethans may have seen these as instruments of heaven or a higher power, revenging wrongs committed by the House of York during the Wars of the Roses.

In 16th century public opinion, there was no separation between body and soul; any defect in one affected the other. A proverb at the time referenced hair color as an indicator of one's personality: "Red wise, brown trusty, pale envious, black lusty." A physical deformity informed Elizabethans of one's entire personality; deformity on the outside signified decay on the inside. An imperfection from birth, such as a hunchback, indicated a permanent and major defect of the soul. Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury and a powerful politician during Queen Elizabeth's reign, was born a hunchback. His "deformity" prompted public criticism and ridicule. Controversy surrounding his possible involvement in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 led some of Cecil's enemies to claim that his corruption was a result of his deformity. Elizabethans would likely have thought the same of Shakespeare's Richard III as they did of Robert Cecil.



Political cartoon depicting Edmund Kean, dressed as Richard III, holding the Drury Lane Theatre on his shoulders with the caption, *The Theatrical Atlas*. Published in London, 1814. British Cartoon Collection (Library of Congress.)

In the Elizabethan view, Richard's deformity would have explained not only his moral corruption but also his ambitiousness and desire for revenge. In his essay "Of Deformity," Francis Bacon writes: "Deformed persons are commonly even with nature; for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part (as the Scripture saith) void of natural affection; and so they have their revenge of nature." As Richard says himself in his opening speech, he is "determined to prove a villain" because his physical appearance does not match the celebratory, peaceful time of Edward's victory. The motivation for his evil deeds throughout the play may have been obvious to Shakespeare's audience: he wanted to exact revenge for his physical deformity. Richard's deformity might also have been viewed as an act of divine retribution for wrongs perpetrated by Richard's ancestors.

The historical King Richard III was not actually misshapen to the extent that actors and literature have portrayed him. There is great controversy around the nature of his "deformity"—some say he was born prematurely, resulting in a sickly childhood and persistent weakness, while others claim he spent two years in his mother's womb and was born with hair and teeth.



Lynnda Ferguson as Lady Anne and Stacey Keach as Richard III in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's 1990-91 production of *Richard III*.

As for his hunchback, the closest evidence found are two conflicting accounts: one that his left shoulder was higher than his right, and another stating exactly the opposite. Regardless, it is generally held that the deformity was probably not noticeable—most definitely not the huge hump and withered arm he is depicted with now. The rumors that spread of a much bigger deformity in the king began long before Shakespeare's portrait. Shortly after Richard's death, the Tudors began describing him as a monster. Their motive was to pin on Richard the deaths of the princes in the Tower, and they believed that an image of Richard as a horrifying, misshapen hunchback would make the crime seem much more plausible. Eventually the rumors were accepted as truth, and Richard gained the physical appearance and reputation that is reflected in Shakespeare's play.

Another significant aspect of Shakespeare's *Richard III* is the supernatural, appearing in the forms of prophecies, dreams and ghosts. Elizabethans believed strongly in what we now term "paranormal" phenomena; astrology, omens and spells were a part of daily life. People often consulted the alignment of the stars and planets before making important decisions. Villagers who practiced "witchcraft" or "wizardry"—wise women and men who can be thought of as Elizabethan holistic healers—were called upon to cure physical ailments with potions and tricks. Their use of "magic" was revered and feared; as often as witches were consulted, they also were blamed when something went wrong in villages. Witch-hunts were common in the 16th Century, and many innocent people were executed for witchcraft in Shakespeare's time.

The character of Margaret in *Richard III* has some distinctive witch-like qualities. At the end of the play, the curses she pronounced in act 1, scene 3 are fulfilled. She is a self-proclaimed prophetess—eccentric, lonely and old. All of these qualities were associated with witches of the 16th century. Margaret is, however, lacking an important component of witchhood: alliance with the devil. She rather invokes God's power in her curses: "I'll not believe but they ascend the

sky / And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace" (1.iii.287-88). Margaret's curses are another instrument of divine retribution: she is seeking revenge for her own injuries, and through her a much larger justice is exacted. Elizabethans paid much attention to omens and signs, including those in dreams. Hastings disregards Stanley's dream of a murderous boar (representing Richard) and dies as a result. The only characters that act as a result of supernatural warnings are Stanley and his nephew Richmond—two of the characters alive at the play's end. Stanley is not the only character in *Richard III* who predicts the future through dreams; Clarence and Richard both have dreams that foreshadow their deaths. Clarence's nightmare is full of warnings of Richard's intent to murder him and hints at his own drowning. Although an Elizabethan audience would have immediately recognized the intervention of some supernatural power in his dream, Clarence is ignorant of its ramifications. Richard's dream likewise forebodes his end. As a string of wronged ghosts curse Richard and encourage Richmond in Richard's sleep the night before the battle, Shakespeare's audience could easily have predicted the outcome of the conflict. Elizabethan ghosts were omniscient—seeing far into the future—and they always appeared with a distinct purpose, usually involving righting a wrong done to them in life. Although these ghosts do not bring about Richard's death and Richmond's triumph, they foretell it, and, in discouraging and scaring Richard (and encouraging Richmond), help their cause. Like Margaret's curses, these spirits have a divine, not demonic, quality; the ghost of Buckingham wishes that "God and good angels fight on Richmond's side."

By the end of the play, with an heir of the house of Lancaster on the throne, divine retribution would have been carried out in the eyes of the Elizabethans. Order is restored, and all have met their predetermined fate.

For Further Exploration

SELECTED ARTICLES

Scene by Scene Synopsis – [The Folger Shakespeare Library](#)

Richard III and the Staging of Disability – [The British Library](#)

In the Elizabethan period, disability was often viewed as a sign of moral impairment. Katherine Schaap Williams considers how Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III relates to both modern and medieval ideas of disability, as well as how the play's performance history complicates our understanding of Richard's body. She thereby reveals a richer and more complex reading of Richard as more than just a monstrous or moral example.

A Modern Perspective: RICHARD III – [The Folger Shakespeare Library](#)

From the standpoint of Tudor history, the most important event in Richard III is the conclusion, and the most important character is Richmond. The victory of Queen Elizabeth's grandfather at Bosworth Field and his marriage to Elizabeth of York ended the Wars of the Roses and established the Tudor dynasty. On Shakespeare's stage, however, the future Henry VII was a pallid figure with a minimal part, and he was not even mentioned on the title page of the first published edition.

Clothe My Naked Villainy – [Utah Shakespeare Festival](#)

The question extending for over 400 years is how could Richard/Gloucester camouflage his dual psyche? Shakespeare's Richard plays the implacable Machiavel, the Vice, and the accomplished actor. Similar to the Roman God Janus, Gloucester really is two-faced; the great dissembler with one face for the audience, and another benign countenance presented to his deceived. In fact, we, the audience, are the only ones to whom he never lies.

A Devotion to Equitable Justice... – [The Richard III Society](#)

Many of those who made their way to Bosworth Field on the morning of 22nd August 1485 had little or no choice in the matter, but some of those who came did have a choice, so it's worth considering what it was they came to fight for. They could choose to fight for their King, certainly, but they could also choose to fight for what he represented. And one of the pillars of Richard's public life throughout his time as Duke of Gloucester which continues into his time as King was a devotion to equitable justice that spanned across the social ladders.

BOOKS

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FILMS

Tower of London (1939)

Tower of London is a black-and-white film. It follows the Shakespearean view of Richard III as he works with an executioner named Mord to eliminate rival claimants to the throne. On the death of his brother he becomes King Richard III, his only remaining rival being the exiled [Henry Tudor](#). The part of Richard is played in Tower of London by Basil Rathbone, an English Shakespearean actor who appeared in more than 70 movies, most famously for his portrayal of [Sherlock Holmes](#) in several films. Rathbone received a Tony Award for his work on stage, was nominated for two Academy Awards, and has three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Richard III (1955)

Directed by and starring Laurence Olivier, this production of Shakespeare's Richard III is amongst the most famous and celebrated film adaptations of the Bard's works. The initial release in 1955 was followed by a US re-release in 1966 which broke box office records. The prologue to the film points out that history without legends would be 'a dry matter indeed'; signposting the artistic licence Shakespeare took with the story of Richard III.

Richard III (1995)

Shakespeare's Richard III was again at the centre of a movie adaptation with an all-star cast. The film sets the play in 1930s Britain, with Richard portrayed by Ian McKellen as a fascist leader seeking to steal the throne. It is perhaps the darkest portrayal of Richard III, likening him to the [Nazi leaders of Germany](#).

Looking For Richard (1996)

Part documentary, part recording of portions of Shakespeare's Richard III, this production was Al Pacino's directorial debut, and also saw him play the character Richard III. The aim was to lead an audience through the plot and themes of Shakespeare's play with scenes woven through the narrative to increase the play's accessibility.

The Lost King (2022)

In the archaeological find of a century, the remains of King Richard III — presumed scattered over 500 years ago — were discovered under a parking lot in Leicester in 2012. The search was spearheaded by amateur historian Philippa Langley, whose passion and unrelenting research were met with skepticism by the academic establishment. *The Lost King* is the inspiring true story of a woman who refused to be ignored and took on Britain's most eminent historians, forcing them to rethink the legacy of one of the most controversial rulers in English history.