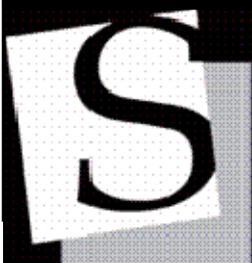
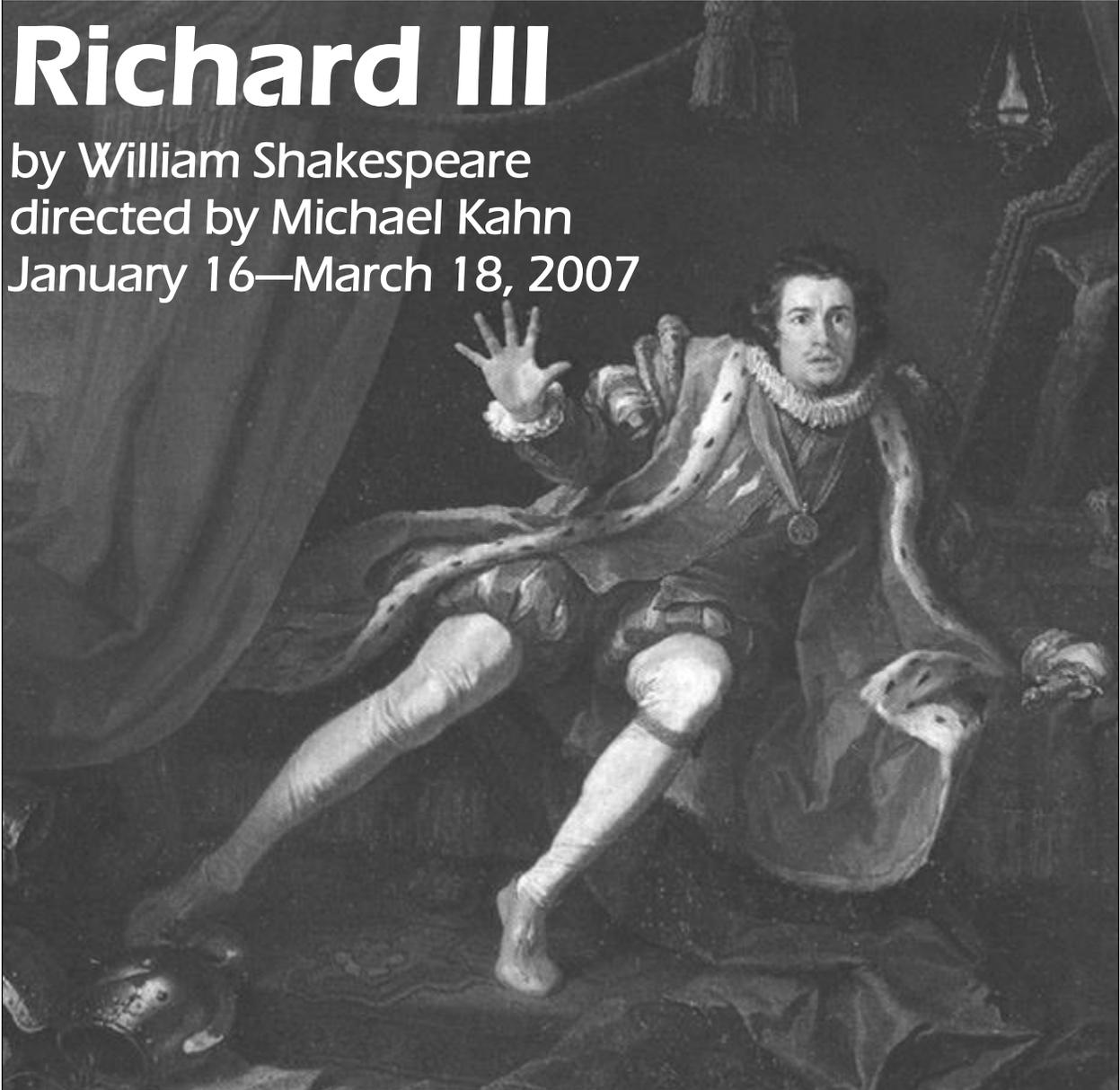


First Folio

Teacher Curriculum Guide

Richard III

by William Shakespeare
directed by Michael Kahn
January 16—March 18, 2007



**SHAKESPEARE
THEATRE COMPANY**

First Folio:

Teacher Curriculum Guide

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Welcome to the Shakespeare Theatre Company's production of *Richard III* by William Shakespeare!

Each season, the Shakespeare Theatre Company presents five plays by William Shakespeare and other classic playwrights. The mission of all Education Department programs is to deepen understanding, appreciation and connection to classic theatre in learners of all ages. One approach is the publication of **First Folio: Teacher Curriculum Guides**.

For the 2006-07 season, the Education Department will publish **First Folio: Teacher Curriculum Guides** for our productions of *An Enemy of the People*, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *Richard III* and *Titus Andronicus*. **First Folio Guides** provide information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production at the Shakespeare Theatre Company. **First Folio Guides** contain material about the playwrights, their world and the plays they penned. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance. **First Folio Guides** are designed as a resource both for teachers and students.

The Shakespeare Theatre Company's Education Department provides an array of School, Community, Training and Audience Enrichment programs. A full listing of our programs is available on our website at ShakespeareTheatre.org or in our Education Programs brochure. If you would like more information on how you can participate in other Shakespeare Theatre Company programs, please call the Education Hotline at 202.547.5688.

Enjoy the show!



The nature of the audience has changed throughout history, evolving from a participatory crowd to a group of people sitting behind an imaginary line, silently observing the performers. The audience is continually growing and changing. There has always been a need for human beings to communicate their wants, needs, perceptions and disagreements to others. This need to communicate is the foundation of art and the foundation of theatre's relationship to its audience.

In the Beginning

Theatre began as ritual, with tribal dances and festivals celebrating the harvest, marriages, gods, war and basically any other event that warranted a party. People all over the world congregated in villages. It was a participatory kind of theatre; the performers would be joined by the villagers, resting on the belief that villagers' lives depended on a successful celebration—the harvest had to be plentiful or the battle victorious, or simply to be in good graces with their god or gods. Sometimes these festivals would last for days, and the village proved tireless in their ability to celebrate. Many of these types of festivals survive today in the folk history of areas such as Scandinavia, Asia, Greece and other countries throughout Europe.

It's Greek to Me

The first recorded plays come from the Greeks (fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E.). Their form of theatre began in much the same way as previous forms did. It stemmed from the celebration of the wine harvest and the gods who brought citizens a fruitful harvest—specifically Dionysus, the god of wine. Spectators had a great deal of respect for their gods, and thousands would flock to the theatre to experience a full day of celebration. The day of drama and song made for a lively crowd. Staff-bearers patrolled the aisles to keep the rowdies under control. While theatre was free, your seat was determined by your station in life. The rich had cushioned seats at the front, while the peasants, artisans and women were forced to take seats at the back. In the later years, after a full day of drink, Greek audiences were not above showing disapproval at a less-than-spectacular performance. Stones were thrown, as well as other sloppy objects, hissing was popular, and loud groanings of discontent could usher any actor into early retirement.

The Romans, or the inspiration for *Gladiator*

The Romans took the idea of "spectator" an inch or so further. Their theatre (first through third centuries B.C.E.) developed in much the same way as the Greeks—with comedy, tragedy and festivals—but unfortunately ended

with what the Christians called "morally inappropriate" dancing mimes, violent spectator sports such as gladiator fights, and the public executions for which the Romans were famous. The Romans loved violence, and the audience was a lively crowd. Because theatre was free, it was enjoyed by people of every social class. They were vocal, enjoyed hissing bad actors off the stage, and loved to watch criminals meet large ferocious animals, and, soon after, enjoyed watching those same criminals meet their deaths.

The Far East

In Asia, theatre developed in much the same way it has elsewhere, through agricultural festivals and religious worship. The Chinese and Japanese audiences have always been tireless, mainly because their theatre forms, such as the Japanese "Kabuki" and "Noh" plays and Chinese operas, could last anywhere between a full day, if not three days, beginning between *six to nine in the morning!* In China, the audience was separated; the higher classes sat closer to the action of the play, and the lower classes, generally a louder, more talkative bunch, would be placed in stalls at the back. The audience expected a superior performance, and if it lacked in any way, the audience could stop the production and insist on a different presentation. In Japan, theatre began with all-day rice festivals and temple plays sponsored by priests. These evolved into "street performances" where the performers led the audience on a trip through the village. In theatre houses, the upper classes sat in constructed boxes, and women in disguise (it was not considered proper for a respectable woman to be seen at the theatre) and lower classes would stand below with the "inspector" standing on a high platform in the middle, keeping a strict eye on everyone.

A Couple of Hundred Years without Art

Tolerance takes a holiday during the period of European history known as the Dark Ages. During this time period culture of all kind goes on hiatus—most especially that frivolous, godless display of lewd and licentious behavior

known as theatre. Fortunately it reemerges with some severe restrictions during the Middle Ages.

Pageant Wagons

Western theatre further develops from the Greek and Roman traditions through the Middle Ages with “Mystery Plays” sponsored by the church. Organized theatre was frowned upon, as it was a place for congregation of the lower classes, encouraging disease and immoral behavior. Church leaders would allow performances of bible scenes, however, for the people who could not read. These productions moved to different locations much like traveling the “stations of the cross.” To spread the good word to the broadest section of the population, these plays left the confines of the church building and began to travel on what were known as “pageant wagons.” These wagons held one entire location and a series of wagons hooked together permitted a company to tell an entire story just about anywhere. Troupes of actors would roam the countryside setting up make-shift theatres in inns, pubs, public squares, pretty much anywhere they could park.

Within This Wooden O

During Shakespeare’s era—the Elizabethan period— theatre companies were awarded status and privilege based on patronage from wealthy landholders or the royal family. With patronage came money, so the companies began building theatres. The theatre of Shakespeare’s day was attended by all, was inexpensive, and was known to be an incredibly good time. Surrounding the stage was the lower “pit” where the lower classes congregated—called the “groundlings”—and above, octagonally surrounding the pit, were the stalls reserved for the upper classes. If you were stationed in the pit, it was not uncommon to have a goblet of wine dumped on your head, to be drooled upon, or spat upon by the “more civilized” people above you. Elizabethan audiences did not know what it meant to be quiet for a performance and would talk back to the actors. Thought to be involved in spreading the “black plague,” the theatres were closed in 1592.

Look at me, look at me...

During the Restoration, theatre became a luxury. For the almost entirely upper-class audience, the purpose of going to the theatre was “to see, and to be seen.” The stage was a rectangular area between a long hallway of boxes. The best seats in the house were often right on stage! The house lights were up full so the audience could see *each other* better, not the action on stage. The theatre of the Restoration consisted mainly of light, fluffy comedies performed in an oratory style—actors posing, wearing BIG costumes and practically screaming over the din of the audience. Theatre companies still existed on the patronage

of the very wealthy and often performed plays exclusively in the salons of the rich, famous and powerful. A few hundred years later, opera composer Richard Wagner figured out that to focus the audience’s attention away from themselves and onto the stage, the lights needed to be off—forcing the audience to watch the performance. Since that time, the audience has taken its cue that the performance is about to begin when the lights overhead begin to dim. This small adjustment in lighting effectively erected a permanent barrier between the action onstage and the audience.

Freud ... Tell Me about Your Mother

While dimming the house lights has drastically changed the overall aesthetic of theatre, another modern movement has had even greater impact on theatre in the 20th century. Psycho-analysis—Id, ego, super-ego and subconscious desires—made theatre more introspective in its search for truth. As theatre became more psychological, more a representation of real life, the audience felt as if they were eavesdropping. Twenty-first-century theatre-goers spend a great deal of time and thought pondering the psychological motivations of characters. There is now an imaginary wall, called the “fourth wall,” separating the performers and the audience. It affects how we view the performance and how actors’ portray characters—we can observe the people onstage as they relate their problems, fears and desires without them noticing us at all.

Now the Options Are Endless

Today, for the audience, just about anything goes. History has shared with us many types of theatre, and we, the spectators, bring our own experiences and histories to the event causing us to react differently to different productions. Unlike movies or television, the actor-audience relationship is a “live” relationship: each is in the other’s presence, in the same place at the same time. It is the exchange between the two which gives theatre its unique quality. As audience members we have an obligation to be attentive, allowing the performers to fulfill their obligation—to entertain and enlighten us. There is always a dialogue between audience and performer, whether visual or vocal. All individuals participating in the theatrical event, whether as audience or performer, bring to it a personal background and experience which becomes vital to their response, to the interaction. In the same way, every participant leaves the performance enriched both by their own individual experience and that of the larger community to which they belong for a brief moment within the confines of the theatre walls. We must listen to capture and understand what the performers are trying to communicate, and, at the same time, they must listen to us.



On William Shakespeare

No man's life has been the subject of more speculation than William Shakespeare's. For all his fame and celebration, Shakespeare's personal history remains a mystery. There are two primary sources for information on the Bard—his works and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in this information and much room for conjecture.

We know a man named William Shakespeare was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, and that he died on his birthday—April 23—but this is perhaps more romantic myth than fact. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to grammar school, since his father was first a member of the Stratford Council and later high bailiff (the equivalent of town mayor). A grammar school education would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin rhetoric, logic and literature.

In 1575, John Shakespeare suddenly disappears from Stratford's political records. Some believe that his removal from office necessitated his son's quitting school and taking a position as a butcher's apprentice. Church records tell us that banns (announcements) were published for the marriage of a William Shakespeare to an Ann Whatley in 1582 (there are no records indicating that this arrangement was solemnized, however). On November 27 of the same year a marriage license was granted to 18-year-old William and 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple six months later. We



The Chandos portrait of Shakespeare, which is the only one known to be produced during his lifetime.

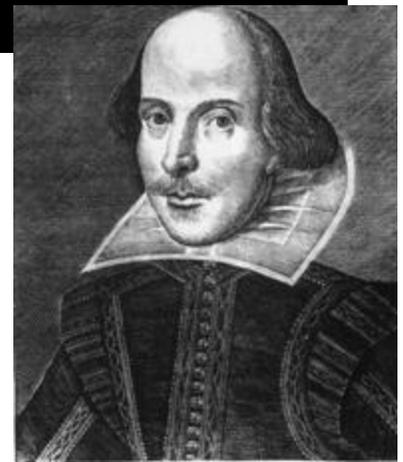
know that twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born soon after and that the twins were baptized. We also know that Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. We don't know how the young Shakespeare came to travel to London or how he first came to the stage. One theory holds that young Will was arrested as a poacher (one who hunts illegally on someone

else's property) and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford. Another holds that he left home to work in the city as a school teacher. Neither is corroborated by contemporary testimony or public record. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that in the years between 1582 and 1592, William Shakespeare did become involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright with one of several repertory companies.

By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, one of the most popular acting companies in London. He was a member of this company for the rest of his career, which lasted until approximately 1611. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he issued a royal license to Shakespeare and his fellow players, inviting them to call themselves the King's Men. In 1608, the King's Men leased the Blackfriars Theatre in London. This theatre, which had artificial lighting and was probably heated, served as their winter playhouse. The famous Globe Theatre was their summer performance space.

In 1616 Shakespeare's daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of a neighbor in Stratford. Her father revised his will six weeks later; within a month he had died. The revised version of William Shakespeare's will bequeathed his house and all the goods therein to his daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr. John Hall, leaving Judith and Thomas only a small sum of money; his wife, who survived him, received the couple's second best bed.

In the years since Shakespeare's death, he has risen to the position of patron saint of English literature and drama. In the 1800s especially, his plays were so popular that many refused to believe that an actor from Stratford had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward De Vere, the Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While most people are content to believe that genius can spring up in any social class or rural setting, the gap between the known facts and the myths that surround Shakespeare's life leaves ample room for speculation.



Portrait of Shakespeare engraved by Martin Droeshout, found on the title page of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's works, 1623.

ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

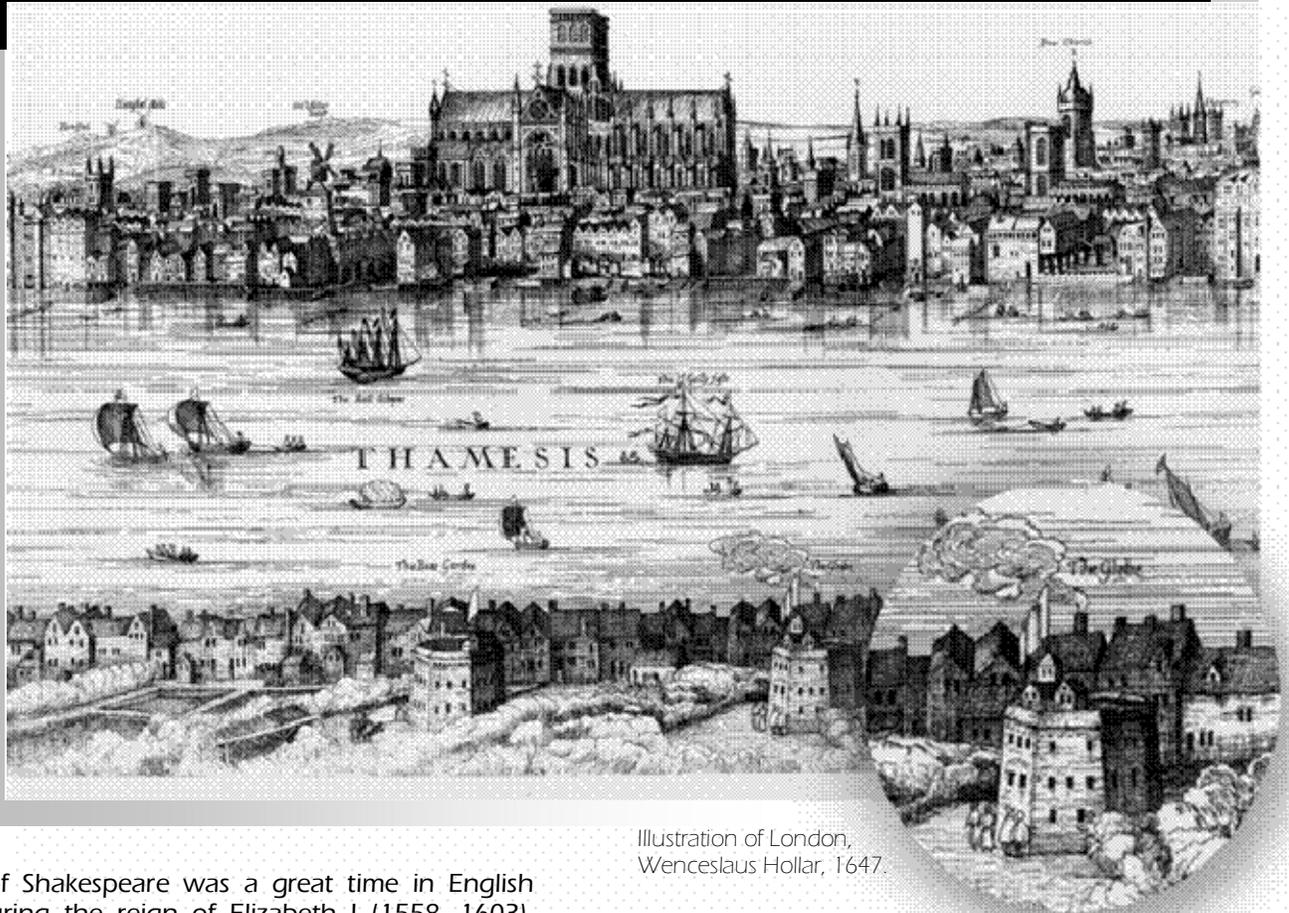


Illustration of London,
Wenceslaus Hollar, 1647.

The age of Shakespeare was a great time in English history. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), England emerged as the leading naval and commercial power of the Western world, consolidating this position with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Elizabeth I firmly established the Church of England (begun by her father Henry VIII after a dispute with the Pope) during this time. London in the 16th century underwent a dramatic transformation; the population grew 400% between 1500 and 1600, swelling to nearly 200,000 people in the city proper and outlying region by the time an emerging artist from Stratford came to town. A rising merchant middle class was carving out a productive livelihood, and the economy was booming.

During Shakespeare's lifetime, England also experienced a tremendous cultural revival. This so-called English Renaissance found expression in architecture, music, literature and drama. Shakespeare both drew inspiration from and enhanced high and popular culture of the English Renaissance. Popular entertainment during the 16th century tended to be boisterous and often violent. Many men, women and children attended public executions of criminals that took place on a regular basis, and persons of all social classes and genders attended theatre performances. The trade of book-making flourished during the period as public education fueled the appetite for great works in print.

During the years 1590-1593, England suffered from an outbreak of terrible proportions; the bubonic plague or

"Black Death" claimed so many lives that English society stood on the verge of collapse. Many businesses, including theatres, closed, in part to keep people from spreading the disease and in part because of the labor shortage that resulted from such widespread illness and death. Once the epidemic subsided, the theatres re-opened and quickly regained their former popularity.

This explosion of commerce and culture lasted throughout Elizabeth's reign and into that of her successor, James I. James' rule brought many changes to English life; the two most pivotal were a bankrupt economy and an intense dissatisfaction from a minority religious group—the Puritans. In September 1642, the Puritan Parliament issued an edict that forbade all stage plays and closed the theatres, an act that effectively brought to a close the Elizabethan Renaissance. Theatres rapidly fell into disrepair and neglect until the Restoration in 1660.

In writing his plays and sonnets, William Shakespeare drew ideas from many different sources. His keen eye for detail and his sharp understanding of human nature enabled him to create some of the most enduring works of drama and poetry ever produced. But his work also provides an insightful commentary on 16th-century English values, life, history and thought.



Shakespeare's Works

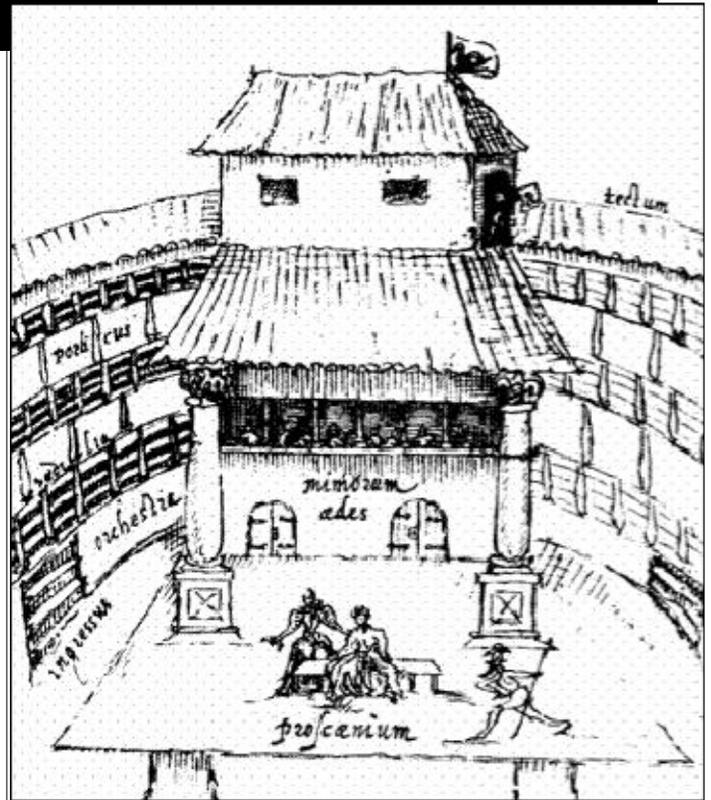
William Shakespeare, in terms of both his life and body of work, is the most written-about author in the history of Western civilization. His canon includes 38 plays, 154 sonnets and two epic narrative poems. During his lifetime, many of his plays were published in what are known as Quarto editions, frequently without receiving the playwright's permission. The Quartos are mostly flawed versions containing added material or missing entire passages from the original works. The first collected edition of Shakespeare's works is called the First Folio and was published after the playwright's death in 1623 by two members of his acting company, John Heminges and Henry Condell. Since then the works of Shakespeare have been studied, analyzed, translated and enjoyed the world over as some of the finest masterpieces of the English language.

Establishing the chronology of Shakespeare's plays is a frustrating and difficult task. It is impossible to know in what order the plays were written because there is no record of the first production date of any of his works. However, scholars have decided upon a specific play chronology based on the following sources of information: 1) several historical events and allusions to those events in the plays; 2) the records of performances of the plays, taken from such places as the diaries of other Shakespeare contemporaries; 3) the publication dates of sources; and 4) the dates that the plays appear in print (remembering that a play was produced immediately after it was written in the Elizabethan age, but may not have been published for years following the first production). Despite the fact that we have an accepted play chronology, we must keep in mind that the dating is conjectural, and there are many who disagree with the order of plays listed on the next page.

Drawing distinctions between Shakespeare's plays and categorizing his works has been a focus of scholars for hundreds of years, and the criteria used to differentiate the plays into types or genres has changed over time.

The distinction between tragedy and comedy became particularly important during Shakespeare's life. During that time writers of tragedy conformed to Aristotle's definition, relating the tale of a great man or woman brought down through hubris or fate. Comedy in this time, much like in our own, descended from the Roman "New Comedy" of Plautus and Terence, which kept away from politics and focused on love, domestic troubles and family affairs.

In the First Folio, some of Shakespeare's plays are divided by their theatrical genre—either Tragedies or Comedies—however, some of the tragedies' protagonists or heroes, like Romeo, Timon or Macbeth, do not easily accommodate Aristotle's definition.



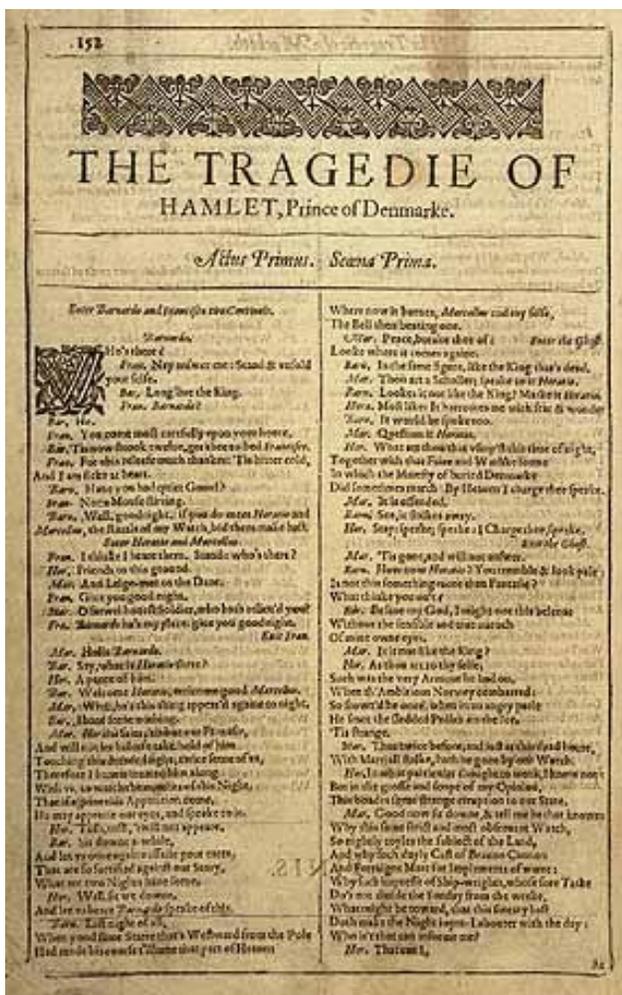
The "Dewitt" sketch of the Swan Theatre is thought to be the only contemporary visual account of an Elizabethan playhouse.

Plays are also categorized in the First Folio as Histories, done so because these works chronicled the lives of English Kings. These plays tended toward tragedy (*Richard II* or *Richard III*, for instance) or comedy (the Falstaff subplots of both parts of *Henry IV* and the Pistol-Fluellen encounters of *Henry V*.) Through the effort to categorize Shakespeare's plays in publication, we can see that his writing style mingled the antagonistic visions of comedy and tragedy in ways that still seem novel and startling. The recognition of this has led scholars since the publication of the First Folio to add additional genres—problem plays, romances, tragicomedies—to help classify the works of Shakespeare. Still other scholars have augmented these genres by grouping the plays chronologically, separating by time periods.

The first period, pre-1594 including *Richard III* and *The Comedy of Errors*, has its roots in Roman and medieval drama—the construction of the plays, while good, is obvious and shows the author's hand more so than his later works. The second period, 1594-1600 including *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, shows more growth in style and a less-labored construction. The histories of this period are considered Shakespeare's best, portraying the lives of royalty in human terms. He also begins the interweaving of genres that would become one of his stylistic signatures. His comedies mature in this period, developing deeper characterization and subjects than previously seen in his work.

The third period, 1600-1608 including *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, includes the great tragedies—the principal works that would earn Shakespeare his fame in later centuries. The comedies of this period show Shakespeare at a literary crossroads—they are often darker and without the clear comic resolution of previous comedies—hence the term “problem plays” to describe them. The fourth period, post-1608 including *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, encompasses what have been referred to as the romances or tragicomedies. Shakespeare at the end of his career seemed preoccupied with themes of redemption. The writing is more serious yet more lyrical, and the plays show Shakespeare at his most symbolic. Scholars argue whether this period owes more to Shakespeare’s maturity as a playwright or merely signifies a changing trend in Elizabethan theatre.

It is important for scholars, teachers and students to keep in mind that these “genre” classifications were not determined by Shakespeare during the writing of each play but imposed after his death to help readers better understand his work.



First Folio title page of *Hamlet*

Shakespeare’s Plays

<u>First Performed</u>	<u>Title</u>
1590-91	<i>Henry VI, Part II</i>
1590-91	<i>Henry VI, Part III</i>
1591-92	<i>Henry VI, Part I</i>
1592-93	<i>Richard III</i>
1592-93	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
1593-94	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
1593-94	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1594-95	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
1594-95	<i>Love’s Labour’s Lost</i>
1594-95	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
1595-96	<i>Richard II</i>
1595-96	<i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>
1596-97	<i>King John</i>
1596-97	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
1597-98	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i>
1597-98	<i>Henry IV, Part II</i>
1598-99	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>
1598-99	<i>Henry V</i>
1599-1600	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
1599-1600	<i>As You Like It</i>
1599-1600	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
1600-01	<i>Hamlet</i>
1600-01	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
1601-02	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
1602-03	<i>All’s Well That Ends Well</i>
1604-05	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
1604-05	<i>Othello</i>
1605-06	<i>King Lear</i>
1605-06	<i>Macbeth</i>
1606-07	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
1607-08	<i>Coriolanus</i>
1607-08	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
1608-09	<i>Pericles</i>
1609-10	<i>Cymbeline</i>
1610-11	<i>The Winter’s Tale</i>
1611-12	<i>The Tempest</i>
1612-13	<i>Henry VIII</i>
1612-13	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen*</i>

* *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is listed although a few scholars do not believe it is an original Shakespeare work. The majority of the play was probably written by John Fletcher, Shakespeare’s close friend who succeeded him as foremost dramatist for the King’s Men.



During the Elizabethan period, “English” was a relatively young language (only about 160 years old) combining Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon. There was no dictionary or standardized literacy education. People in Shakespeare’s London spoke much more than they read, causing the rules of grammar and spelling to be quite fluid. Writers created new words daily and poets expressed themselves in a new form of writing known as blank verse, first appearing in 1557 in *Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenis* by the Earl of Surrey:

They whistled all, with fixed face attent
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak, O Queene, it is thy will,
I should renew a woe can not be told:

(Book II, 1-4)

That the verse was “blank” simply meant that the poetry did not rhyme, allowing rhyme-less poets such as Virgil and Ovid to be translated and Elizabethan playwrights to emulate the natural rhythms of English speech within iambic pentameter.

A typical line of verse from this time contains five units of meter or feet. Each foot contains two syllables. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (dee DUM), it is an iamb (iambic meaning push, persistency or determination). The prefix penta means five, as in the five-sided shape—a pentagon. Iambic pentameter is therefore one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.

It was this new tradition of blank verse in iambic pentameter that Shakespeare inherited as he embarked on his career as playwright and poet. Similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop or the beat of a piece of music, iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare’s verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that emulates the natural speech and rhythms of life. Here is a standard line of verse in iambic pentameter from *Romeo and Juliet*.

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
(II.ii.2)

If we were to say the rhythm and not the words, it would sound like this:

dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM

When we scan a piece of text (marking it with a “∪” for the unstressed and “/” for stressed), we simply tap out the rhythm of the line, based on dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM, to see if the line is structured in iambic pentameter:

∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
(II.ii.2)

Embracing the rules of this new verse, Shakespeare’s early writing operated almost entirely within strict iambic pentameter.

Prose in Shakespeare’s work is not in iambic pentameter and relies more heavily on other literary devices for its speed and rhythm. These devices include: antithesis (setting opposite words against each other), lists (series of actions or descriptive words that build to a climax) and puns (the use or misuse of a word to mean another word). Shakespeare used prose to express conversation between the lower classes, like the Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or familiar or intimate scenes, as with Henry and Katherine at the end of *Henry V*. He also utilized prose to express madness or vulgarity, as in the nunnery scene of *Hamlet*. The exact meaning of a shift from verse to prose is not constant, but it always signals a change in the situation, characters or tone of a scene. Only *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* rely almost entirely on prose.

In the following passage from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, note antithesis in Ford’s comparison of himself with Page and of other men’s possessions with Mistress Ford, see the list of things Ford would rather trust others with than his “wife with herself” and observe the pun on “effect”:

Ford

Page is an ass, a secure ass; he will trust his wife, he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself. Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy!

(II.ii.300-314)

As his writing skill level increased, Shakespeare gradually employed alliteration (the repetition of a vowel or consonant in two or more words in a phrase), assonance (resembling vowel sounds in a line) and onomatopoeia (words with sounds imitating their meaning) to create deeply poetic, vibrant images on stage for the characters and his audience. Examples of these three literary devices are found in the following four lines:

Chorus

From camp to camp through the foul womb of night
 The hum of either army stilly sounds,
 That the fixed sentinels almost receive
 The secret whispers of each other's watch.

(*Henry V*, IV.4-7)

The hard “C” is repeated in the first line (alliteration), the “O” is heard in “through”, “foul” and “womb” (assonance) and the word “whispers” in the last line imitates the sound whispers produce (onomatopoeia).

By the time Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, he sometimes allowed a character’s thoughts to overflow their usual pentameter lines with an extra beat, often ending with a soft or feminine ending. He also utilized more and more enjambéd or run-on lines, allowing thoughts to continue from line to line, rather than finishing a thought per line. He grew to express the inner life of his characters and the size of their thoughts within the structure and the scansion of the text. In this famous passage from *Hamlet*, notice the overflow in the first line of Hamlet’s huge thought beyond the regular pentameter, forming a feminine ending:

u / u / u / u / u / u / u

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

(III.i.55)

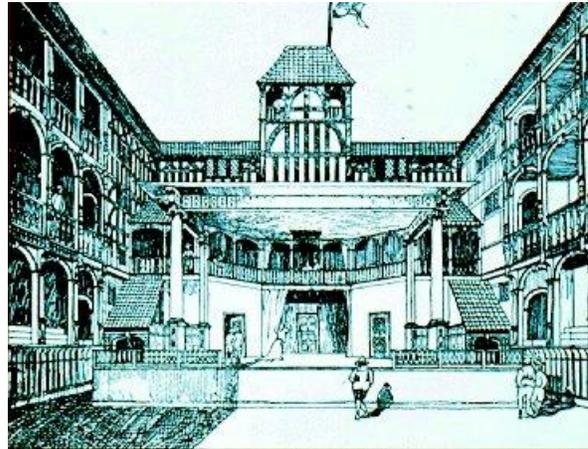
With this overflow, Shakespeare expresses the enormity of Hamlet’s thought, his situation and the uneasy exploration of this argument. (It is important to remember, however, scanning is subjective and must be decided by the individual actor or reader.) This line might also be scanned:

u / u / u / / u u / u

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

(III.i.55)

This creates a trochee, or an iamb of reversed stress—
 DEE dum.



An artist’s rendition of the inside of an Elizabethan theatre.

Eventually, in *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare became a master of building, breaking and reinventing rhythms and language to create an entire tone or world for a play. Continuously experimenting and exploring the combination of form, meaning and language, he used short and shared lines between characters more and more, as in *Macbeth*, allowing the speed and rhythm of characters’ thoughts to meet and collide.

Lady Macbeth I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
 Did not you speak?

Macbeth When?

Lady Macbeth Now.

Macbeth As I descended?
 (II.ii.15-19)

By the time Shakespeare gives his final farewell in *The Tempest*, believed by many to be his last play, his verse is so varied and specific to character and situation that it is extremely difficult to scan. Shakespeare broke, rebuilt and reinvented the verse form so many times that he plays the equivalent of jazz in the rhythms of *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. At the end of *The Tempest*, in Prospero’s powerfully simple epilogue, Shakespeare brings his work full circle by returning to the simplicity of regular verse. Having created almost 1,700 words, timeless characters and the greatest poetry in the history of the English language, Shakespeare “buries his art” and returns to the form with which he began.



Shakespeare's Life and Works	Western History	Events in Western Art, Science & Culture
<p>1564 William Shakespeare born to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon.</p>	<p>1558 Queen Elizabeth I takes the throne.</p> <p>1562 A series of civil wars between Catholics and Protestants, known as the Wars of Religion, begin in France.</p> <p>1564 John Calvin, an influential Protestant leader during the Reformation, dies. An outbreak of the plague devastates London.</p> <p>1568 A revolt of the Spanish-ruled Netherlands against Philip II, King of Spain, begins the Eighty Years War.</p>	<p>1540 Michelangelo finishes painting <i>The Last Judgment</i>.</p> <p>1543 Copernicus' heliocentric theory, claiming the sun is the center of the universe, is first published.</p> <p>1564 Christopher "Kit" Marlowe born.</p> <p>1565 Arthur Golding translates Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i>. The text later influenced Shakespeare's work.</p>
<p>1570 John Shakespeare first applies for a family coat of arms. His application is denied.</p>	<p>1580 Sir Frances Drake circumnavigates the Earth.</p> <p>1586 Mary Queen of Scots is tried for treason and executed by beheading.</p> <p>1588 The British Navy defeats the Spanish Armada, avoiding a long war between England and Spain.</p> <p>1589 The Wars of Religion end when Henry of Navarre ascends to the throne to become King Henry IV of France.</p>	<p>1567 Richard Burbage, a tragedian who portrayed many of Shakespeare's characters, born.</p> <p>1572 Poet John Donne born.</p> <p>Playwright Ben Jonson born.</p> <p>1576 The first permanent theatre in England, The Theatre, is built.</p> <p>1577 Raphael Holinshed publishes <i>The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland</i>, which becomes Shakespeare's primary source for the history plays.</p>
<p>1582 William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.</p> <p>1583 Shakespeare's daughter Susanna born.</p> <p>1585 Shakespeare's twins Judith and Hamnet born.</p> <p>1587 Shakespeare goes to London to pursue life in the theatre.</p>	<p>1598 Philip II of Spain dies. The French Protestants are permitted to freely practice their religion by the Edict of Nantes.</p>	<p>1580 Thomas Middleton, a playwright who collaboratively wrote many plays, born.</p> <p>1588 Marlowe's play <i>Dr. Faustus</i> first produced.</p> <p>1590 Marlowe's play <i>The Jew of Malta</i> first produced; it influenced Shakespeare's <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>.</p> <p>1592 Thomas Kyd's <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> first produced. It influenced Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i>.</p> <p>1597 The Theatre permanently closes due to the expiration of its lease.</p> <p>1599 The Globe Theatre is built on Bankside from the timbers of The Theatre.</p>
<p>1593 Shakespeare writes <i>Venus and Adonis</i>. Also begins writing the <i>Sonnets</i>.</p> <p>1594 Shakespeare becomes a founding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.</p> <p>1596 Hamnet Shakespeare dies at age 11.</p> <p>1597 Shakespeare purchases New Place in Stratford.</p> <p>1599 Shakespeare's family is granted a coat of arms.</p>	<p>1601 The Earl of Essex attempts to rebel against Queen Elizabeth, fails and is executed.</p> <p>1603 Sir Walter Raleigh is arrested, tried and imprisoned for disobeying the Queen by secretly marrying one of her maids of honor.</p> <p>Queen Elizabeth dies. King James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots, becomes King James I of England. The plague once again ravages London.</p> <p>1604 England establishes a peace treaty with Spain.</p> <p>1607 Jamestown, one of the first English colonies in the Americas, is founded.</p>	<p>1597 The Theatre permanently closes due to the expiration of its lease.</p> <p>1599 The Globe Theatre is built on Bankside from the timbers of The Theatre.</p>
<p>1601 Shakespeare's father dies.</p> <p>1603 The Lord Chamberlain's Men are renamed the King's Men. They perform at the Court of King James I more than any other company.</p>	<p>1610 King Henry IV of France is murdered. He is succeeded by his son, Louis XIII.</p> <p>1618 The Protestant German princes and their foreign supporters begin their struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. This marks the start of the Thirty Years War.</p>	<p>1603 The "Scientific Revolution" begins with Johann Kepler's recordings of planetary movements and Galileo Galilei's perfection of the telescope.</p>
<p>1605 Shakespeare purchases more land in Stratford.</p> <p>1608 The King's Men begin playing at the Blackfriars Theatre, a prominent indoor theatre.</p> <p>1609 Shakespeare's <i>Sonnets</i> published.</p> <p>1616 In March, Shakespeare, apparently ill, revises his will. On April 23rd he dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.</p>	<p>1610 King Henry IV of France is murdered. He is succeeded by his son, Louis XIII.</p> <p>1618 The Protestant German princes and their foreign supporters begin their struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. This marks the start of the Thirty Years War.</p>	<p>1606 Ben Jonson's play <i>Volpone</i> is written.</p> <p>1607 Burbage leases the Blackfriars Theatre for indoor performances.</p>
<p>1609 Shakespeare's <i>Sonnets</i> published.</p> <p>1616 In March, Shakespeare, apparently ill, revises his will. On April 23rd he dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.</p>	<p>1610 King Henry IV of France is murdered. He is succeeded by his son, Louis XIII.</p> <p>1618 The Protestant German princes and their foreign supporters begin their struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. This marks the start of the Thirty Years War.</p>	<p>1611 The King James Bible first published.</p> <p>1616 Ben Jonson's <i>Workes</i> published in folio.</p>
<p>1623 Shakespeare's <i>First Folio</i> published.</p>		

Synopsis of *Richard III*

After a long civil war England enjoys a period of peace under King Edward IV and the victorious Yorks. But the king's younger brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, resents Edward IV's power and the happiness of those around him. Malicious, power-hungry and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard plots to seize the throne by removing any and all impediments between him and the crown.

Richard halts the procession accompanying the casket of the former-king Henry VI. Over Henry's coffin Lady Anne Neville, daughter-in-law of Henry IV and wife of Prince Edward (both of whom Richard has murdered), curses Richard. He manipulates her so successfully that she agrees to be his bride. Richard's next step is to cause the murder of his older brother George, Duke of Clarence—the next in line for the throne. By insinuating Clarence committed treason, Richard has his brother arrested (having already arranged for him to be murdered while imprisoned). Richard is now positioned to serve as regent to King Edward IV's son (also named Edward), the Prince of Wales, until he comes of age. Ailing, Edward IV succumbs to illness; and Richard sends the Prince of Wales and his younger brother to the Tower—to better “protect” them. He then moves against the court noblemen who are loyal to the Princes; Vaughan, Rivers, Hastings and Grey are imprisoned and later executed. Richard also has the boys' maternal relatives—the powerful kinsmen of Edward IV's wife, Queen Elizabeth—arrested and executed.

With Queen Elizabeth and the princes now unprotected, Richard has his political allies, particularly Lord Buckingham, campaign to have Richard crowned king. After a clever planting of insinuations regarding the illegitimacy of Edward IV and his children, Richard ascends to the throne as Richard III. By this time, Richard has alienated even his own mother, who curses him as a bloody tyrant. Recognizing the need to bolster his claim to the crown, Richard sends a murderer to dispose of the princes. Buckingham, until now Richard's staunchest ally, angered at the murders of the two young boys and at Richard's false dealings with him, flees. When rumors begin to circulate about a challenger to the throne who is gathering forces in France, noblemen defect in droves to join him. The challenger is Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond a descendant of the Lancaster family asserting his own right to the throne.

Richard has his wife, Queen Anne, murdered, so that he can pursue a marriage with young Elizabeth, daughter of former Queen Elizabeth and dead King Edward IV. Though Elizabeth is Richard's niece, the alliance would secure his claim to the throne.



Photo by Carol Rosegg

Wallace Acton as Richard in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's 2002-03 production of *Richard III*.

Queen Elizabeth manages to forestall Richard and secretly arranges an alliance with Richmond.

In one final ruthless act, Richard captures his former ally Buckingham on his way to join with Tudor's armies and has him beheaded. Former allies have all turned against Richard to join forces with Richmond who has landed in England and is marching inland to claim the crown. On the eve of the battle, both men are visited in dreams by the ghosts of all those whom Richard has slaughtered, returning to condemn Richard and to hearten Henry Tudor. Tudor's forces defeat Richard's army at the Battle of Bosworth Field. Henry Tudor slays Richard exclaiming, "The bloody dog is dead" (V.v.ii). Accepting the crown as Henry VII, he marries Elizabeth of York, thus uniting the white rose (the Yorkists) and the red rose (the Lancastrians). This is the founding of the Tudor line of kings and the end of the Wars of the Roses.



Rewriting History

“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.

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 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. **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.

British Cartoon Collection (Library of Congress)

The Language of *Richard III*

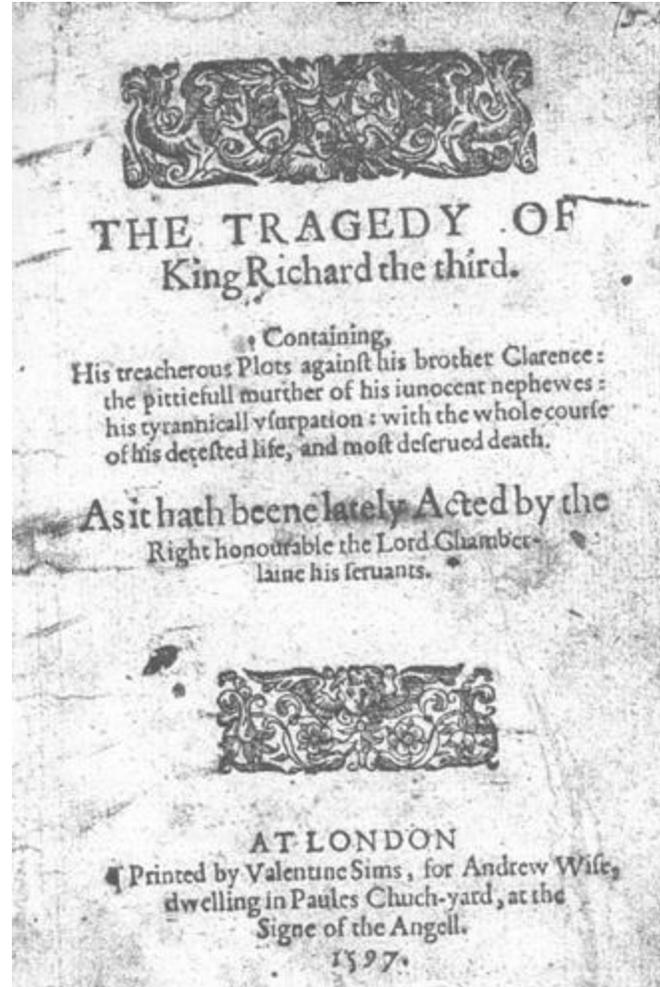
As a student at Stratford Grammar School, young William Shakespeare learned how to read and write through the art of **rhetoric**. An ancient approach to communication dating back to the Greeks, rhetoric was a style of writing that placed the same importance on both *what* was said and *how* it was said, 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.

l.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.



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

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

l.i.18-23

This also sets up the animal imagery that will continue through the play. Richard gives us the

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

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”:



Portrait of Richard Mansfield as Richard III, 1855.



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

The Ronald Grant Archive.

Library of Congress

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 as Richard III in the 1995 film directed by Richard Loncraine.

Aquarius Library/United Artists

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.

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.

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

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 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. **S**



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

Photo by David Cooper.

Question & Answer: The Wars of the Roses



What were the Wars of the Roses?

The Wars of the Roses were a series of civil wars fought over control of the crown in England from 1455 to 1487 C.E. between the Houses of Lancaster and York, two branches of the royal Plantagenet family. Both families were descended from sons of King Edward III—John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Edmund, Duke of York. The houses both claimed their right to the throne based on their direct descendency from these two sons; on both sides, the desire for power and disputes over the proper order of succession led to outbreaks of violence as rulers were usurped and killed. Historians named the conflicts the “Wars of the Roses” because, during the wars, the Yorkists used a white rose as their badge and the Lancastrians used a red rose. At the end of the war, the victorious Tudor family created an emblem of a single rose with both red and white petals, symbolizing the union of the two houses and a new time of peace. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare dramatizes the very end of the series of wars and the triumph of Henry Tudor.

In Medieval England, what were the rules of succession?

In England, kings were selected based on a political and religious concept called the Divine Right of Kings. Divine Right was based on the premise that the monarch was anointed, or chosen to rule, by God. There were strict rules of succession that ensured that only members of the king’s royal bloodline could become the next monarch, so that the country would continue to be ruled by God-given authority. When a king died, the crown passed to his eldest son. If his eldest son died and had no children, the crown passed to the king’s next oldest son, and so on through the sons. If the king had no children, the crown would go to his oldest brother. If the oldest brother died and had no children, the crown passed to the king’s next oldest brother, and so on. The order of succession stretched far beyond siblings and children to guarantee an undisputed heir to the throne, even if the king’s entire immediate family died before him. According to Divine Right, any attempt to remove a proper monarch from the throne was an act against God.

If there were such strict rules about succession of kings, why were there disputes over the crown?

In 15th-century England, the king held almost all the political power of the country. However, the political structure was not an absolute monarchy. In 1215 C.E., a document called the Magna Carta limited the powers of the king and led to the creation of Parliament, the English legislative body. The king was required to consult with Parliament before making important decisions—mostly raising taxes—which guaranteed nobles and landowners a say in lawmaking. In addition, the king required the support of these nobles to maintain his rule over the country. At this time, England operated under feudalism, a political/economic system in which land-owning nobles allowed farmers to live and work on their property in exchange for their pledge of loyalty in times of armed conflict. If the king made unpopular decisions or was viewed as incompetent by his wealthier subjects, the nobles were able to call up armies and threaten him with an uprising. During the Wars of the Roses, disputes surrounding the proper order of succession led to years of rebellion, as nobles raised armies and vied for power when dissatisfied with kingly rule. When a conqueror took the crown, he took steps to ensure that he was viewed as the proper king according to Divine Right—which often involved killing anyone else who had a claim to the throne.

How did the dispute over succession begin in the Wars of the Roses?

The conflict began with the death of King Edward III in 1377 CE. Edward III outlived his eldest son—also named Edward and called the Black Prince—who, according to Divine Right, should have succeeded Edward III. The Black Prince had a son, Richard, who was the next in line for the crown. However, Richard was only 10 years old; and Edward III had two other living sons, the Dukes of Lancaster and York, who both believed that they would make better candidates than their nephew, the young Richard. Upon King Edward III’s death, his privy council (his advisory group of wealthy, powerful lords) decided that the boy should be crowned King Richard II and his uncles should act as regents, or primary advisors, until the boy came of age. The Dukes of York and Lancaster accepted the decision, but used their power to maintain regent status well into Richard II’s adulthood. In his 30s, King Richard II finally began ruling England on his own, but he proved an ineffective ruler and failed to appease the frequently feuding English lords. Eventually even Richard II’s own privy council thought he was a bad king. The negative opinions of the king led the houses of Lancaster and York to consider asserting their right to the throne.

The Duke of Lancaster’s eldest son, Henry Bolingbroke, claimed that he had more of a right to be king than Richard II as a descendent of the eldest surviving son of Edward III. In 1399, with the support of friends and noblemen angry with Richard’s rule, Bolingbroke demanded that Richard II renounce the throne and crowned himself King Henry IV. Finally, he threw Richard II into jail, where the former king died with no heirs. England was now under Lancastrian rule, but with a monarch many felt had violated Divine Right. (Shakespeare dramatizes these events in the play *Richard II*.)

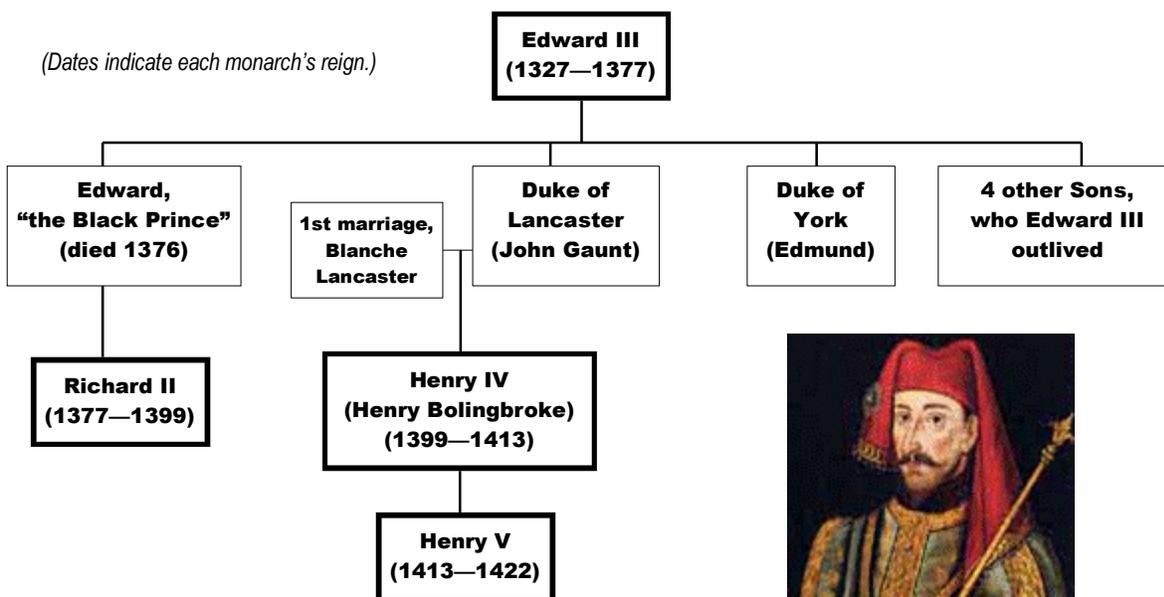
How long did the Lancaster family rule England?

Despite the controversy surrounding King Henry IV's rise to power, he ruled for 14 years and his son succeeded him without dispute. King Henry V was a competent and powerful leader, and his wars to reclaim the French lands once held by Edward III made him popular with his subjects. (Shakespeare dramatizes Henry V's adolescence, rise to power and reign in the plays *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* and *Henry V*.) Unfortunately, Henry V's untimely death in 1422 again raised questions about succession when his infant son was crowned King Henry VI. Older relatives acted as regents until Henry VI came of age. During his reign, Henry VI lost all French lands gained by his father and struggled with mental illness. He was made even more unpopular by a poor attempt to make peace with France by marrying the French king's daughter, Margaret of Anjou. Already viewed as a weak king, Henry VI suffered a mental breakdown in 1453, rendering him incapable of ruling the country. The powerful and popular Richard, Duke of York (grandson of the first Duke of York), was named Protector of the Realm and ruled in Henry's stead. Clearly a stronger ruler, the Duke of York also felt he had a valid claim to the throne because of his direct descent from Edward III's son. He began to assert his authority in minor clashes with powerful supporters of Henry VI. When Henry recovered in 1455 and took back control of the crown, Queen Margaret built up an alliance against Richard, Duke of York, to attempt to diminish his influence.



Henry V

The first battle of the Wars of the Roses broke out in 1455 when the thwarted Richard, Duke of York, raised a small army and marched on London, meeting Henry VI's forces at St. Albans. Richard battled bitterly with the king's army, commanded by Margaret. The battle was a Yorkist victory, regaining some influence for Richard, and the Yorkists and Lancastrians compromised to maintain the peace for four years. However, disputes over who would be heir to the throne continued—Henry VI had a young son, but many powerful nobles believed Richard, Duke of York, should be the successor. The dispute broke out into violence again in 1459, and Richard was killed in the Battle of Wakefield in 1460. Nevertheless, Richard's eldest son, Edward of York, prevailed at the Battle of Towton and was crowned King Edward IV in 1461. Edward banished Margaret and her son to France and imprisoned the former king Henry. (These events are dramatized in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3*.)



Henry IV

How long were the Yorks in power? Did the Lancaster family get the crown back?

No, the crown stayed with the Yorks until the wars' end. King Edward IV fought some rebellions against his claim on the English throne, were successful. Edward IV had controversially married the widowed commoner Elizabeth Woodville and, at her request, granted her large extended family titles and favors. The King's younger brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and many other nobles resented this. In 1483, King Edward IV died from natural causes, and Richard was appointed regent for Edward IV's 13-year-old son, against the wishes of the Queen's relatives. With this position of power, Richard punished the Woodvilles by delaying Prince Edward's coronation. Word broke out that Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville while betrothed to another woman, voiding their marriage and making their son illegitimate. Just crowned King Edward V, the English no longer considered the boy of royal blood. At the request of several nobles, including the Duke of Buckingham, Richard was crowned King Richard III.

Full of turmoil and unhappiness, Richard III's two-year reign concluded the York's hold on the throne. Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond, a noble distantly descended from the House of Lancaster, raised a rebellion and took the crown in 1485 after defeating Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field. Richmond solidified his claim to the throne by marrying young Elizabeth, King Edward IV's daughter, and uniting the Houses of York and Lancaster. (These events are depicted in *Richard III*.)



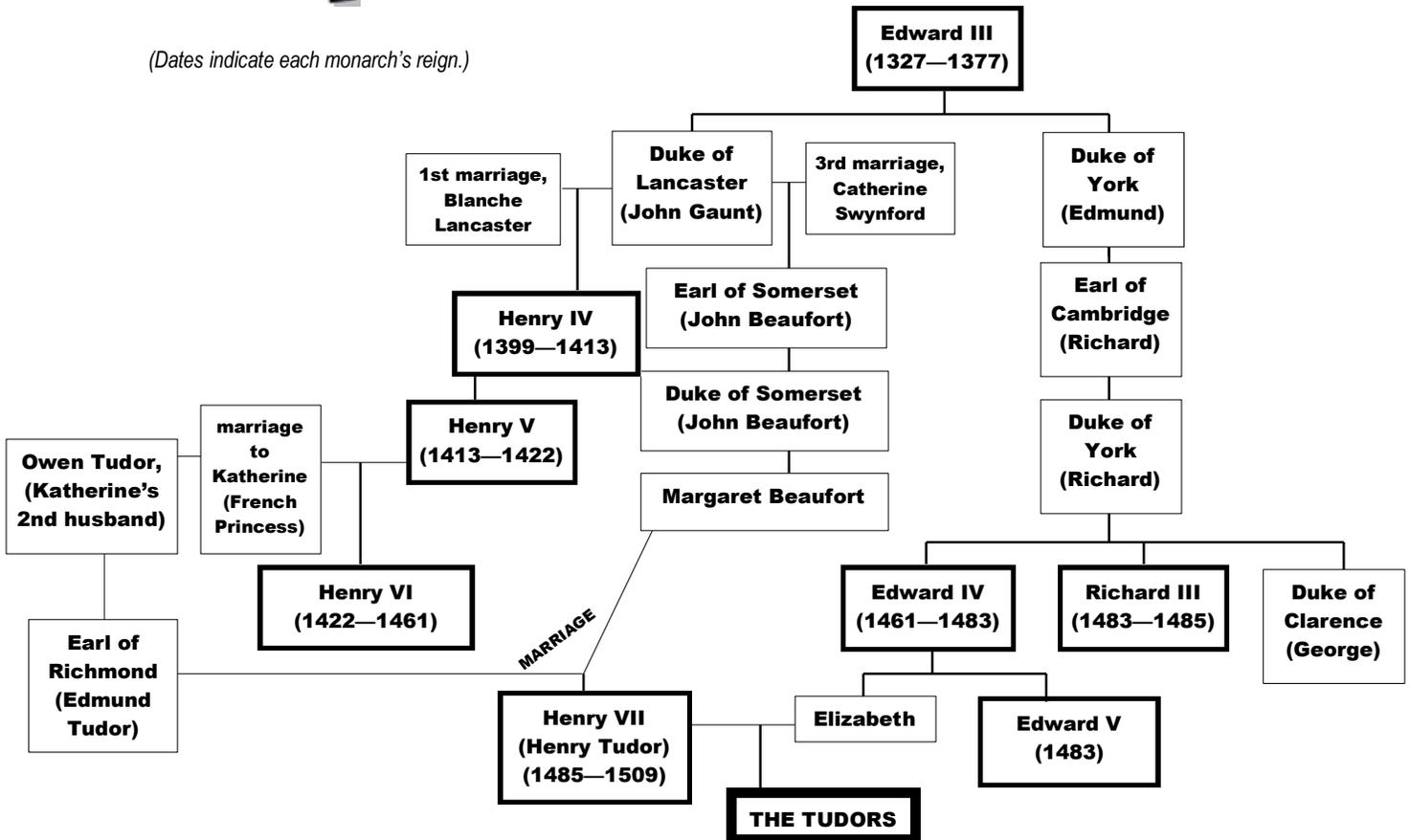
Henry VII
Henry VII

So who won the war?

The Tudor family ended up holding the crown for five generations. Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, was crowned King Henry VII and ruled from 1485-1509. His successors were Henry VIII (r.1509-1547), Edward VI (r.1547-1553), Mary I (r.1553-1558) and Elizabeth I (r.1558-1603), who ruled during Shakespeare's time.



(Dates indicate each monarch's reign.)



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.

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. 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



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.)

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" (I.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 omnipotent—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. 



Photo by Joan Marcus.

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

Classroom Connections

Before the performance...

Director's Chair

Imagine you are directing a production of *Richard III* and preparing for the first meeting of your production team, which includes the set, costume, lighting and sound designers. Consider the topics a director would want to address in this meeting by responding to these questions:

- Why do you want to direct this play?
- In what time-period will this production occur and why?
- What are you looking for in an actor to play the character of _____?
- What locations/atmospheres must the set create?
- What does this world look and sound like?

In small groups, ask students to share their responses and discuss the similarities and differences in their artistic visions for the play. Challenge the students to create a group vision for the play, incorporating ideas from all the “directors.”

Just a Dream

Elizabethans believed dreams contained omens and foretold future events. In *Richard III*, Clarence's dream foretells his murder at Richard's order. Read act 1, scene 4 aloud as a class and identify the imagery, symbolism, metaphors and foreshadowing present in Clarence's dream. Ask students to free-write about a memorable dream they've had. Then ask students to write a monologue telling the story of the dream, utilizing vivid imagery, symbolism, metaphors, coach students to refer to emotions they felt during the dream, their emotional state while retelling the dream and what the dream may say about what is happening in their lives. Collect all the monologues and make a dream notebook.

False Faces

Many characters in *Richard III* operate by seeming to be what they are not. This tactic is especially important in I.ii, when Richard convinces Anne to marry him, and III.vii, when Richard “agrees” to become King. Divide students into groups, assigning half the groups one scene and half the groups the other. Ask each group to go through their scene identifying false statements, then brainstorming the true intentions/feelings of the characters who say them. Have the students play their scene for the class with some group members reading from the text and others reading the characters' “inner monologues.” Afterwards, discuss similarities and differences in scene interpretation.

What Will People Do for Power?

Richard will do anything to remove the obstacles between himself and the throne, and he shares his plots with the audience as the play proceeds. Make a list of everything that Richard does—everyone that he betrays, lies to and kills—in order to gain the crown for himself. How many people does Richard kill to get what he wants? Discuss what might happen to such a “ruler” in today's world?

First Ladies — Now and Then

Medieval England was a patriarchal society. Women, even queens, did not have much power without their husbands. Queen Elizabeth, wife to King Edward IV, begins the play in a position of high status and power, but when her husband dies, Richard is able to imprison and execute her family, leaving her powerless and alone. Queen Margaret, too, began her life as a powerful woman leading armies into battle against the Yorks, but when her husband and son were killed, she was left alone to curse the Yorks for the wrongs done to her. Ask students to discuss the role of women in *Richard III*, compared to the role of women in politics now. What is a First Lady's responsibility in modern times? What was a Queen's responsibility in medieval times? Ask students to imagine the fate of young Elizabeth, whose marriage is arranged with Richmond to secure his political power. Ask students to write two diary entries from young Elizabeth's perspective, one dated during the events of the play, and one dated at a time in Elizabeth's future. Share diary entries and compare ideas about Elizabeth's future life.

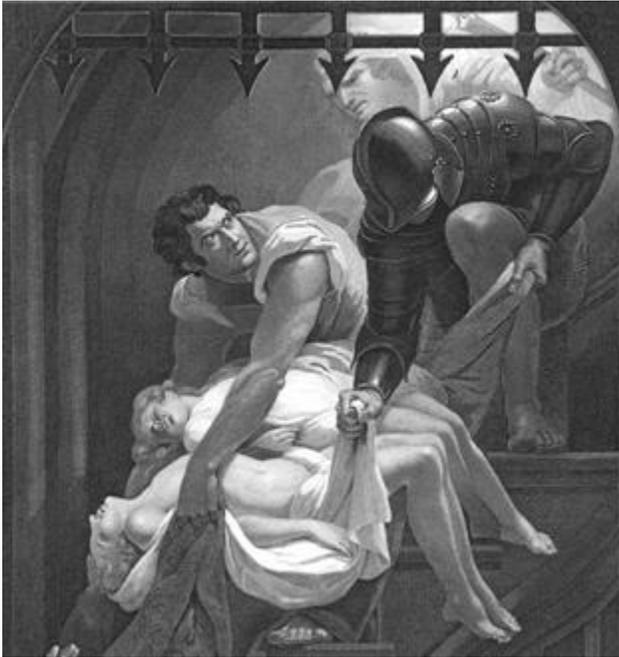


Genevieve Ward as Queen Margaret at the Lyceum Theatre, 1896.

Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection.

Classroom Connections

...After the performance



Library of Congress

Burial of the Young Princes in the Tower by James Northcote, engraved for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 1795.



The Tragedy of Richard

The full title of Shakespeare's play is *The Tragedy of Richard III*. What is the catalyst for the tragedy? What action sets the plot in motion? Is the story a tragedy, and is Richard III a tragic hero? Would we consider him a hero in the 21st century? Why or why not?



Bedtime in the Tower of London

Audiences meet the two young princes with their uncle Richard right before they leave for the Tower of London. They never see the pair again or learn anything about their time in the Tower—except that it ends in murder. In pairs, have students read aloud from the beginning of act 3, scene 1, until the princes' exit after line 153. Then have the pairs improvise a scene between the two boys on their first night in the Tower. What do they think of their uncle's reasons for sending them there? How do they feel about staying there? After the pairs have created this scene, introduce a third character—the murderer, Tyrrel. Ask students to create another dialogue around this new turn of events. Present the two scenes to share with the class.



Interpreting History

Over the years, there has been a great deal of discussion about the accuracy of Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III and the motives for reworking specific historical events for his play. Have the class brainstorm the major events in the lives of one of the following figures or another historical personality:

- President George W. Bush
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Queen Elizabeth I

Divide the class into groups to write a scene-by-scene outline or storyboard for a play about the life of this historical figure. Groups may take artistic license to adjust events and character traits where necessary to fit their message. Have each group present their play to the class and discuss the role of the playwright as historian.



Lets Get Critical

The director and design team for the Shakespeare Theatre Company's *Richard III* had a concept, or artistic vision, for this production. Ask students to write a review of *Richard III*, describing what they thought the story of the play was, and how the set, lights, sound and costumes helped to tell the story (or detracted from it). In their critiques, students should select a particular scene to support their opinions. Share the reviews in class and discuss the similarities or differences of opinion. Collect all the reviews and send to the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department.



Safe Violence

In Shakespeare's plays, staging violence is very important. Certified professionals work with actors to choreograph violence that looks real, tells a clear story and maintains safety for everyone involved. Ask students what they thought about the staged violence in the production at the Shakespeare Theatre Company. What elements of the staged violence were effective, and what, if anything, was not successful. Students can practice safe and effective physical story-telling by having a slow-motion food fight. Instruct students to split into two groups and line up on either side of the room. Each student should imagine they are holding a tray full of food. Ask students to be very specific about what food is on their tray, and experiment by picking up different types of food (e.g. spaghetti, pudding, soup, a dinner roll, a ketchup bottle). Coach students to cross the room toward the other team, always in super-slow motion, and make eye contact with another student. Once eye contact has been established, students can continue their slow-motion imaginary food fight. Coach students to stay in slow motion and tell a clear and engaging story. What kinds of engaging stories did students see their classmates perform? Ask students why they think working in slow motion is important to story-telling and safety, and what they learned about story-telling from participating in the slow-motion food fight.

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- Shakespeare: A Virtual Field Trip—hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/Svtour.html
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- Sir Thomas More's *The History of King Richard the Third*—<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/more/moretext.html>
- Richard III Society, American Branch—<http://www.r3.org/intro.html>
- Richard III Foundation—<http://www.richard111.com/>
- Wars of the Roses—www.warsoftheroses.com