

RICHARD III

STUDY GUIDE



CSC

DEAR TEACHERS,

This study guide from the CSC archives was created in 2007 and updated in 2020. It was designed as a resource for you to use both before and after you work with our teaching artists and visit our theater. It is packed full of information about Shakespeare, his language, the play, and our production of the play.

Feel free to photocopy pages for your students!

We love hearing from you, and we welcome your feedback. We also encourage you to share your students' work with us – we'd love to feature it!

EMAIL student work to: marella.martinkoch@classicstage.org.

For the latest updates, we encourage you and your students to follow CSC on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @classicstage.

We hope you enjoy *Richard III*.

Sincerely,

Marella Martin Koch
Education Coordinator



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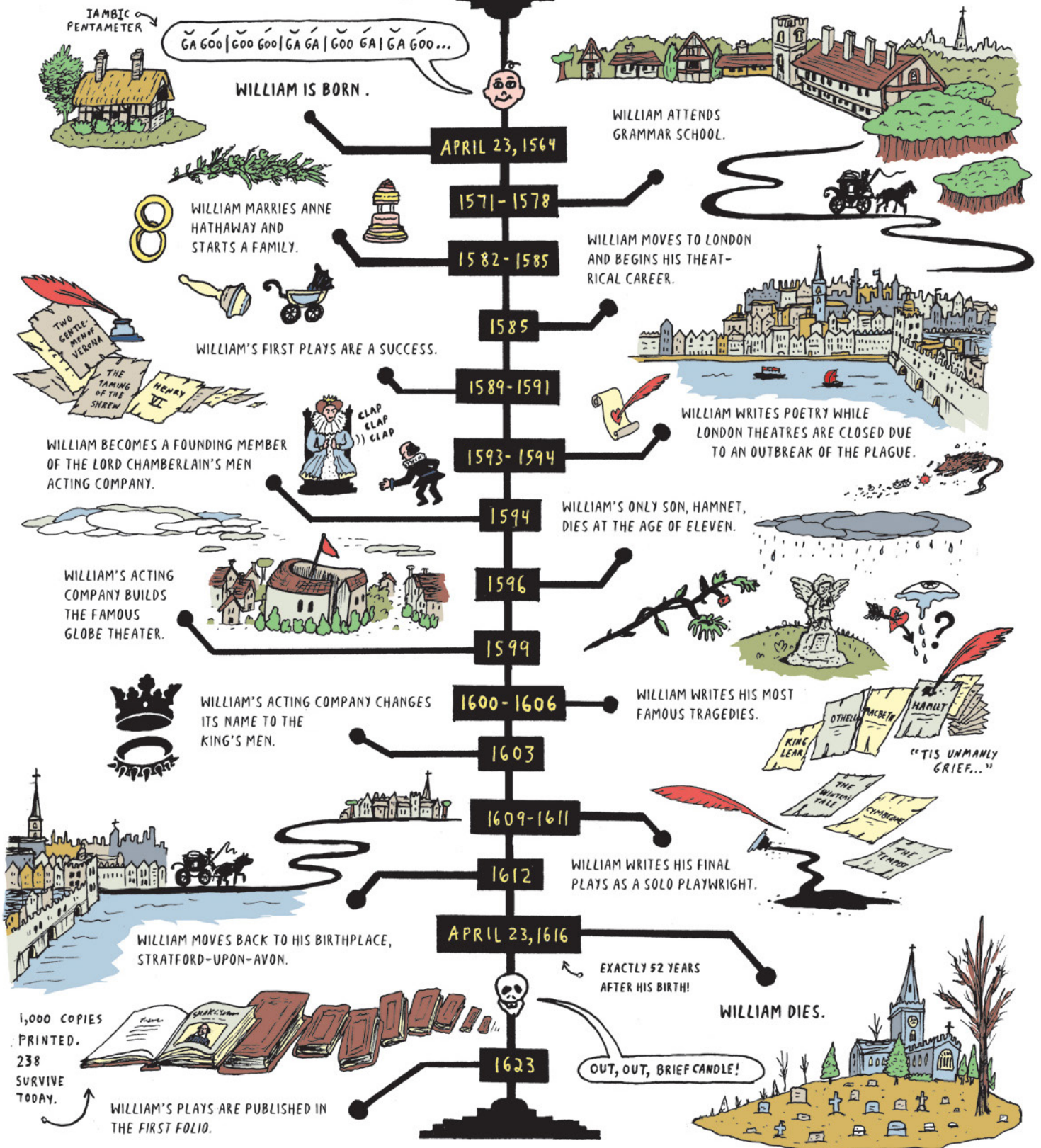
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PART ONE:

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND THEATER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID HEATLEY



ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

IN 16TH CENTURY ENGLAND,

religion and politics were one and the same. People believed in the “divine right of kings”—that is, monarchs were given their right to rule directly from God, and were subject to no earthly authority. In 1534, King Henry VIII famously broke from the Catholic Church when they denied him the right to a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who had not produced a male heir. He declared himself head of the new Anglican Church, which eventually became part of the Protestant Reformation. His actions resulted in a time of bitter and violent religious disputes in England, and the crown changed hands frequently in a short period of time.

BY THE TIME SHAKESPEARE WAS

BORN IN 1564, Queen Elizabeth—Henry VIII’s second eldest daughter, born to his second wife, Anne Boleyn—was in power. Her 44 years on the throne provided the kingdom with more stability than the previous short-lived reigns of her two half-siblings, Edward VI (crowned at age 9 and dead by age 16) and Mary Tudor (nicknamed “Bloody Mary” for the nearly 300 Protestants she had burned at the stake).

QUEEN ELIZABETH’S REIGN WAS A TIME OF THRIVING CULTURE.

English citizens loved her, nicknaming her “Good Queen Bess”. Because she remained unmarried throughout her rule and did not give birth to an heir, a distant relative, King James VI of Scotland, was named as her successor. Both Elizabeth and James were great patrons of the theater, and enjoyed Shakespeare’s plays. In fact, King James honored Shakespeare’s company of actors with the title of “The King’s Men”, and they performed at court regularly.



ELIZABETHAN TWITTER FEED

A CSC exclusive! We went back in time and got the scoop from the Royals themselves (plus Shakespeare, and his dad!) via Twitter.



King Henry VIII @VIIIKING · 1531

@CatAra you are outta here. This king needs a #maleheir. #kingsgreatmatter



Anne Boleyn @AnnieB · January 25, 1533

@CatAra check me out!!!. You better recognize, I AM THE NEW QUEEN! #cinderellastory



Catherine of Aragon @CatAra · December 1535

The #kingsgreatmatter is literally killing me. Missing my daughter @BloodyMary.



Edward VI @Eddie_the_KING · January 28, 1547

I’m the King of the world!!!! RIP, Dad @VIIIKING #kidsrule #9yearsold #winning



Mary Tudor @BloodyMary · July 19, 1553

Turn down 4 Protestantism. Turn up 4 Catholicism! This one’s for my mom, @CatAra, RIP. #sorrynotsorry



Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · 1560

Philip II, Eric XIV of Sweden, Henry of Anjou...So many suitors. So little time. #singleNready2mingle (i/k I have work to do) #swiperight



John Shakespeare @Stratfor_Dad · April 26, 1564

Baptized my son William today @HolyTrinityChurch! #blessed



William Shakespeare @BillyShakes · 1589

Working on my 1st play! RT with title suggestions. It’s a comedy w/ a lot of errors.



Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · April 23, 1597

Saw a HYSTERICAL play by @BillyShakes! Check out Merry Wives of Windsor! #LoveMeSomeFalstaff #ChamberlainsMen



King James I @Scotty · March 24, 1603

RIP @GoodQueenB, thanks 4 the throne! #transformationtuesday #JacobeanEra



King James I @Scotty · May 19, 1603

Congrats to my boy @BillyShakes and his players. #thekingsmen #royalpatent #Othello #MeasureForMeasure



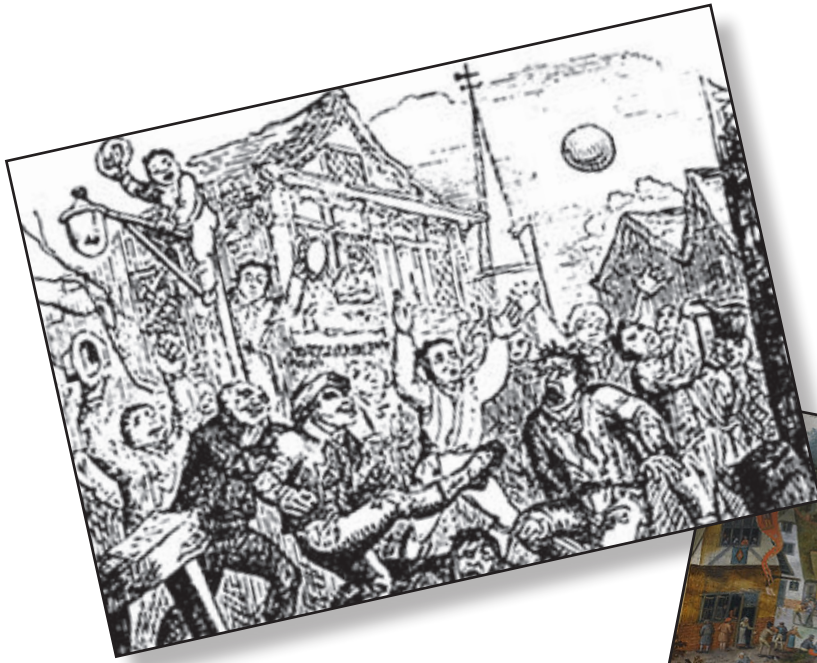
Anne Hathaway @ShakesWife · April 23, 1616

RIP/Happy birthday @BillyShakes. Thanks 4 the bed. @HolyTrinityChurch



GROWING UP SHAKESPEARE: FUN, GAMES, AND SCHOOL

BOYS AND GIRLS began “petty school” around the age of four in order to learn how to read. Girls left school at age six to be taught at home by their mothers, or, if they were rich, a private tutor. If boys belonged to a middle class or wealthy family, they could continue on to “grammar school” after leaving petty school, or they were sent to work in some sort of trade, such as farming. At grammar school boys would study Latin, drama, poetry, and history for long hours with no desks. Learning Latin was important for any boy wanting to enter a career in law, medicine, or the Church. Because Shakespeare’s father made a sustainable living in public and government jobs, Shakespeare was able to attend grammar school where he likely picked up his love of drama and writing.



FOOTBALL—or soccer, as we know it—was a popular sport for people in the countryside around Shakespeare’s hometown. The balls were made from inflated pigs’ bladders! **(LEFT)** Shakespeare makes mention of this sport in *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*: “Am I so round with you as you with me, that like a football you do spurn me thus?” Other popular sports of the day Shakespeare mentions in his works include tennis, bowling, wrestling, rugby, billiards, and archery.

FESTIVALS occurred at various times of the year. One of the most popular was on May 1st, May Day, the celebration of the arrival of summer! Columns were erected (maypoles) and adorned with ribbons and flowers, traditionally as part of a dance **(RIGHT)**. This tradition is reflected in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM*: “They rose early to observe the rite of May.”



RIGHT: Children learned to read using “hornbooks” like these – a piece of wood covered with printed-paper, protected by a transparent sheet of horn.



LONDON CITY LIVING: FILTH, FASHION, AND FIGHTING

IF YOU LIVED IN LONDON during Shakespeare's time, you would have encountered overly crowded streets, heaps of trash on the sidewalk, and the heads of executed criminals placed on poles for all to see. But amidst the grime, there were also beautiful churches and large mansions filled with nobles and wealthy merchants. Most items you needed would have been purchased from street vendors, including vegetables, fruits, toys, books and clothing.



ABOVE: Like New York City today, space was tight. Many buildings were designed with vertical living in mind, as London quickly became the epicenter of culture in England.



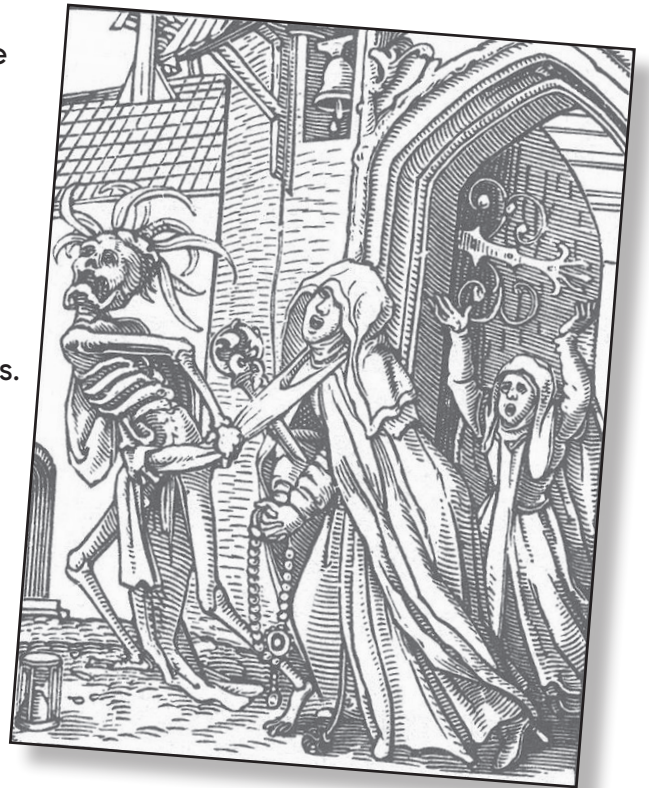
SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON to work in the theater. But theater wasn't the only cultural event happening in London. You could also view bloody tournaments between animals, and public executions! Gambling was also popular.



The first theater was built in 1576. Its shape, like The Globe (**ABOVE**), was influenced by bear fighting-rings (**RIGHT**), which were popular in London at the time. Shakespeare referenced this Elizabethan sport in Macbeth when Macbeth states, "They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, but bear-like I must fight the course."



In 1592, the plague forced London theaters to shut their doors for two whole years. 12,000 Londoners lost their lives. With no playhouses to produce his works, Shakespeare focused his attention on writing narrative poems and sonnets for wealthy patrons.



CLOTHING WAS A SIGN OF ONE'S RANK so there were strict rules dictating what citizens could and could not wear. Those dressing above their status could be arrested! Exceptions were made for actors as they often played nobles on stage.



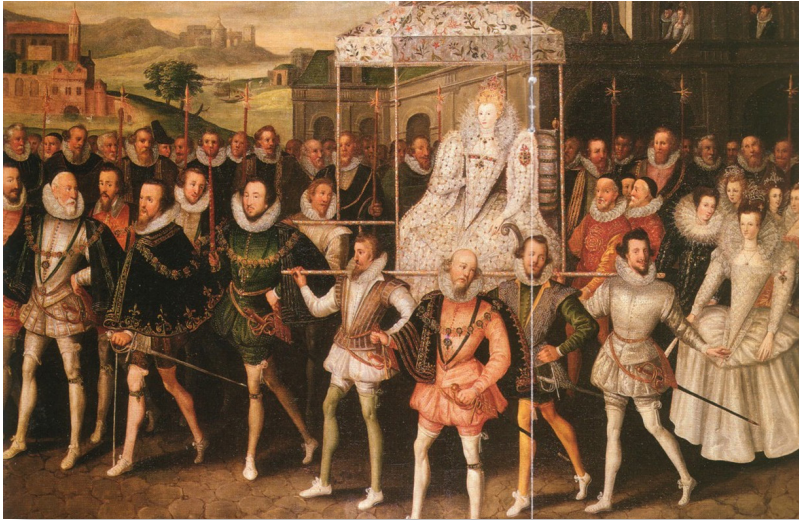
ABOVE: As a rule, the less practical the outfit, the higher the rank of its wearer. Wealthy men often wore hats with ostrich feathers for decoration, and huge “ruff” collars. Wealthy women wore wide padded dresses with puffy sleeves.



RIGHT: The less wealthy wore practical clothing conducive to labor. While the wealthy were wearing luxurious fabrics such as silk and velvet, the lower-status citizens often wore rough wool.



THE COURT



ABOVE: The procession of Queen Elizabeth I. She is surrounded by her courtiers, ladies maids, and favored knights.

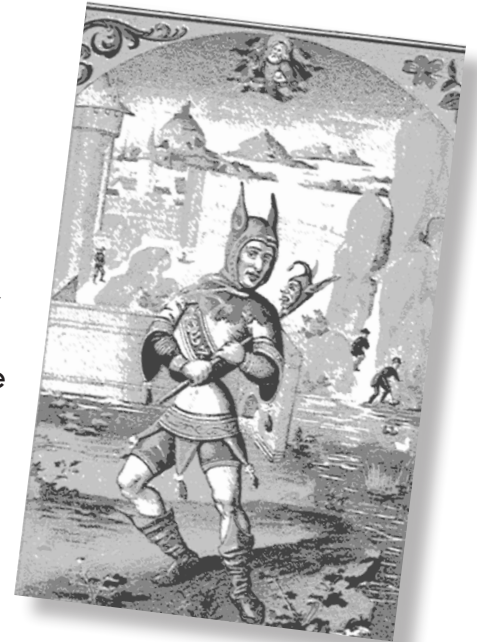
FOOLS AND JESTERS were a familiar sight at court. They traditionally wore motley, a colorful patchwork costume, and functioned like resident stand-up comedians or clowns. There were two types of fools: natural, and artificial. In Elizabethan England, mental and learning disabilities weren't understood, but those who had one of these disabilities could earn a living for themselves if they could make people laugh. Fools of this kind were called natural, meaning they were born "foolish." Artificial fools were deliberately foolish or eccentric for the purposes of entertainment, much like the comedians of today.

CHIVALRY, a code of ethics that glorified warfare and armed conflict as well as the pursuit of courtly ladies, was revered by Elizabethan society. They believed that honor was something you attained through physical prowess rather than moral integrity. Some of these values still exist in our culture today—superheroes are often heroic because they have incredible combat abilities. Legendary knights were the superheroes of the Renaissance!



THE COURT OF QUEEN

ELIZABETH I was made up of courtiers, people who were of a higher class that were invited to attend the queen as a companion or advisor. The number of courtiers that attended Elizabeth ranged from one thousand to fifteen hundred, and they were housed at the palace or in nearby lodging. They were paid a small amount of money, but could make themselves quite wealthy through accepting bribes from people who required favors from them. As such, the court was full of corruption and the queen had to be discerning about whose advice she heeded. However, it was a statement of the queen's popularity and wealth that she travelled with such a large entourage.



ABOVE: A motley fool! Notice that this fool's motley costume has ass's ears attached, a common symbol of foolishness. He also carries a "ninny stick," a rod with a carved imitation of his own face at the end.

LEFT: One of the most important figures in the history of chivalry was Saint George who, according to legend, tamed and killed a dragon to save a damsel in distress and convert a city to Christianity.



WELCOME TO

THE GLOBE THEATRE

LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT "THIS WOODEN O."

THE COMPANY WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY RENEWING THE LEASE ON OUR FIRST THEATER, SO IN 1599 WE TORE IT DOWN AND MOVED ITS TIMBERS ACROSS THE THAMES RIVER TO THE BANKSIDE AND BUILT THE GLOBE.

THE BANKSIDE IS GREAT — IT'S JUST OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF LONDON, SO WE'RE SAFE FROM CITY OFFICIALS WHO THINK THAT THE THEATER IS IMMORAL AND WANT TO ABOLISH IT.

THE ORIGINAL GLOBE BURNED DOWN IN 1613 WHEN CANNON FIRE—PART OF A PERFORMANCE OF HENRY VIII—ACCIDENTALLY SET THE THATCHED ROOF AFLAME! OOPS!

WE BUILT A SECOND, MORE ELABORATE GLOBE ON THE SAME SITE, AND IT REMAINED IN USE UNTIL CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT IN ENGLAND IN 1642.

THE FLAG IS FLYING! THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT A PERFORMANCE TODAY.

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THAT GENTLEMAN PAID FOR HIS CUSHIONED SEAT. I'M RIGHT ABOVE ALL THE ACTION! EVERYONE CAN SEE THAT I'M A VIP.

THE STAGE ROOF PROTECTS THE ACTORS FROM THE WEATHER, AND ALSO ACTS AS A SET PIECE WE CALL THE "HEAVENS." SEE THE STARRY SKY WE PAINTED?

THE BALCONY IS GREAT FOR WINDOW SCENES.

O ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

DID YOU KNOW JULIET WAS PLAYED BY A BOY? NO GIRLS ALLOWED!

THIS IS A "THRUST" STAGE, MEANING WE HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS ON THREE SIDES. JUST LIKE AT CSC!

THIS TRAP DOOR LEADS TO "HELL," THE SPACE BENEATH THE STAGE. IT MAKES A GREAT GRAVE, TOO!

ALAS, POOR YORICK. I KNEW HIM...

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THOSE "GROUNDLINGS" PAID TO STAND IN THE YARD BELOW. AND FOR AN EXTRA PENCE, I GET TO SIT ON A CUSHION!

THE GLOBE CAN ACCOMMODATE NEARLY 3,000 AUDIENCE MEMBERS. CSC'S HOUSE ONLY SEATS ABOUT 200.

CHEAPEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE! WELL, IT'S NOT A SEAT, EXACTLY. AT LEAST I GET TO SEE THE SHOW!

THE "GROUNDLINGS" SOMETIMES THREW FRUIT AT THE ACTORS IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE A PERFORMANCE!

Joseph D. Adams.

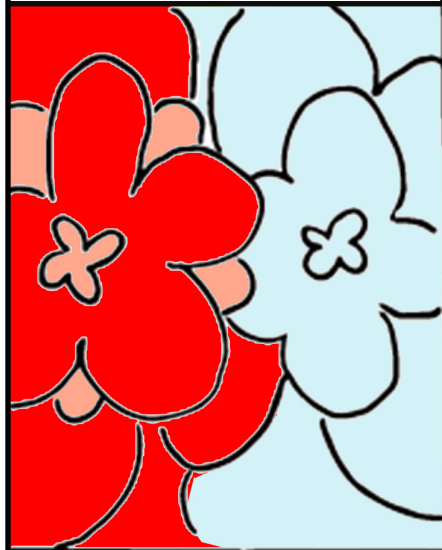


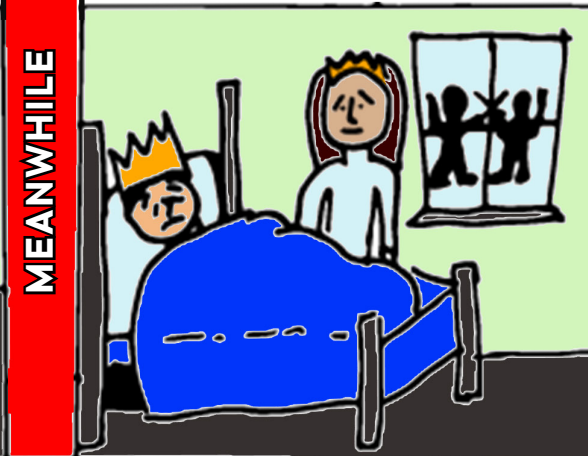


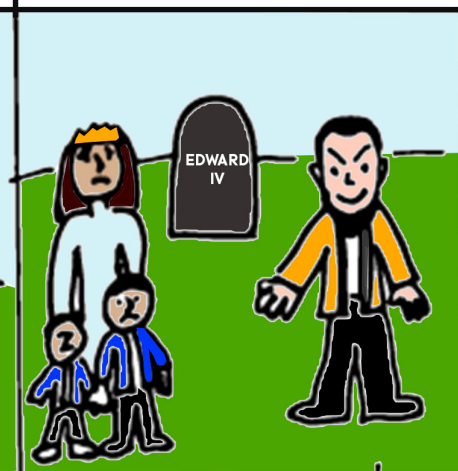

DAVID HEATLEY



PART TWO:

THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

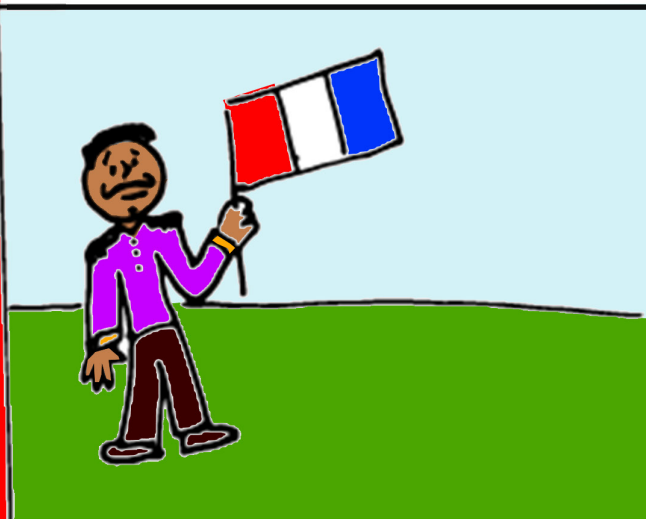
<p>King Henry VI has just died. England is in a Civil War between the York and Lancaster families.</p>	<p>Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, tells the audience his plot to take the throne.</p>	<p>Richard's first target is his brother George, Duke of Clarence, next in line for the throne. He convinces King Edward that George is a threat. The King imprisons George.</p>
		
<p>Realizing that he'll need a queen, Richard woos Lady Anne, widow to Prince Edward of the House of Lancaster, (whom Richard murdered).</p>	<p>Queen Elizabeth and her allies struggle as Edward's health declines and various factions fight for power at court.</p>	<p>Queen Margaret, widow of King Henry VI, warns everyone to be wary of Richard, but they ignore her.</p>
	<p>MEANWHILE</p> 	
<p>Richard sends men to murder George, Duke of Clarence, in the Tower.</p>	<p>King Edward VI dies and Richard is made Lord Protector of England the absence of a King.</p>	<p>Richard works with Buckingham to imprison Queen Elizabeth's allies and escort her sons to the Tower of London. Queen Elizabeth takes sanctuary.</p>
		

Richard tells Buckingham to murder the young princes, and Buckingham refuses. Richard hires assassins to smother the princes as they sleep. Buckingham flees Richard's wrath, but he is captured and killed.

The Earl of Richmond raises a French army to reclaim the throne for the House of Lancaster and restore peace and order to England.



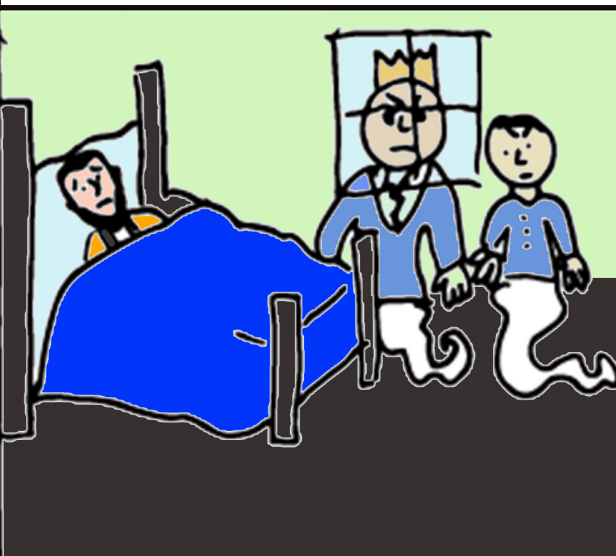
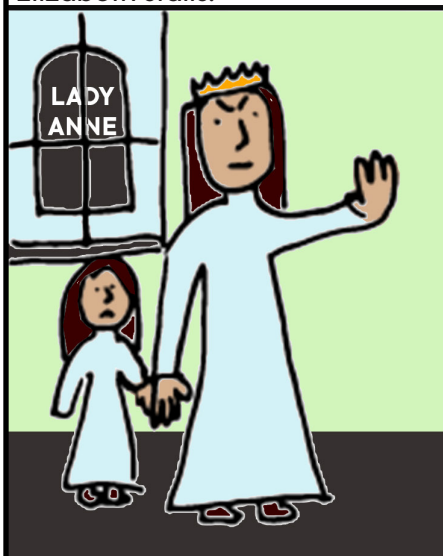
MEANWHILE



To secure his claim to the throne, Richard kills Lady Anne. He plans to marry his niece Elizabeth of York, but her mother Queen Elizabeth stalls.

The Earl of Richmond and the French arrive in England. The night before the battle, Richard is visited by the ghosts of all whom he has wronged.

The following morning, Richard is killed in battle by Richmond.



The Earl of Richmond takes the throne as Henry VII. Elizabeth of York and Henry Tudor are betrothed, and their engagement marks the end of the war between the Houses of York and Lancaster.



WHO'S WHO

THE LANCASTERS

Henry VI
(killed by Richard III
before the play)

Married

Queen Margaret

Edward
(killed by Richard III
before the play)

Married

Lady Anne

Richard
Duck of Gloucester
later Richard III

THE YORKS

Duchess of York

Edward IV

Married

Queen Elizabeth
Woodville

Sons from
previous
marriage

Lord Gray
of Dorset

Marquess
of Dorset

Prince Edward

Richard Duke of York

George
Duke of Clarence

Boy

Daughter

RICHARD'S SUPPORTERS

Sir William Catesby
Sir Richard Ratcliffe
Lord Lovell
Duke of Norfolk
Earl of Surrey

RICHARD'S OFFICIALS

Duke of Buckingham
Lord Hastings
Lord Stanley

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S SUPPORTERS

Earl Rivers
Elizabeth's Brother
Thomas Vaughan

Henry Tudor
Duke of Richmond
later King Henry VII

RICHMOND'S SUPPORTERS

Earl of Oxford
Sir James Blunt
Sir Walter Herbert
Sir William Brandon

+ clergymen, citizens, murderers, soldiers, officials, and others



A SHORT GLOSSARY FOR *RICHARD III*

Act I

Falchion – a slightly curved sword

Moiety – portion, half

Noble – coin worth 1/3 pound

Iwis – certainly

Cacodemon - evil spirit

Surfeit – excess

Elvish-marked – physical attribute caused by elves

Malapert – showing lack of respect

Zounds – a strong oath meaning “by God’s wounds”

Sop - dry bread or cake soaked in wine

Malmsey butt – a barrel of sweet wine

Meed – reward

Act II

Nonage – young age

Embassage – an envoy or ambassador

Cordial – medicinal drink

Wot – knows

Politic – wise

Parlous – dangerous

Go to – idiom meaning 'come on!'

Act III

Complots – conspiracies

Digest – arrange

Shriving work – confession and absolution

Foot – cloth horse- horse's ornamental cloth indicating rider's status

Conversation – euphemism for sexual affair

Guildhall – meeting place of medieval guild

Betimes- early

Act IV

Cocatrice - mythical creature whose gaze could kill

Humor – character, personality

Wont – used to, familiar habit

Caitiff – enslaved person

Recomforture – comfort

Cozen – to deceive

Act V

Battalia – body of troops in the battle formation

Pursuivant-at-arms – visor of knight's helmet

Peise – weigh

Fulsome – excessive

Caparison - ornamental covering for a horse

Welkin – the sky

Overweening – conceited



NOTES ON THE PLAY

"And here I prophesy: this brawl today,
Grown to this faction in the Temple garden,
Shall send, between the Red Rose and the White,
A thousand souls to death and deadly night."

-Henry VI, Part One

The War of the Roses

In brief, the War of the Roses was a series of civil wars that threw the entire state of England into a long and bloody period of civil and political disorder. At the center of the conflict were two houses of English royals: the House of Lancaster and the House of York. Interestingly, the period of conflict wasn't known as The War of the Roses until Shakespeare fictionalized a scene in Henry VI, Part I, where the Houses of Lancaster and York respectively chose different colored roses to represent each House.

Historically, there's some truth to this; after the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, it's commonly thought that the Earl of Lancaster chose the red rose as a heraldic device (coat of arms). Edmund of Langley, the first Duke of York, similarly chose the white rose to represent the purity of the Virgin Mary and by extension the House of York near the end of the 14th century, likely around the late 1380's.



Henry IV, detail of a manuscript illumination from Jean Froissart's *Chronicles*, 15th century

The English civil war began at the end of the 14th century with a series of claims to power by the opposing houses. King Richard II was overthrown by his cousin Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster. Bolingbroke was outside the natural line for the crown, and though he was eventually crowned as Henry IV, his government was entangled in revolts against his claim to power. Because Richard II had a pretty unpopular reign, the rebellions against Henry IV never amounted to much and were all successfully contained. When Henry IV passed in 1413, his son Henry V was next in the Lancastrian line of succession. With his successful military career in the Hundred Years' War against France, Henry V secured the public's confidence in more than just his personal kingship; he secured the House of Lancaster's grip to the English crown. After Henry V died in 1422, the nine-month old Lancastrian King Henry VI ascended the throne.

During Henry VI's reign, Henry V's holdings in France were lost, and fractious opinions on what to do with the war in France arose between the houses. The House of York, represented by Richard, Duke of York (future Duke of Gloucester), hoped to continue the war, while Henry's court was condemned for not providing adequate monies and men for the campaign. On top of this, Henry VI suffered from mental illnesses throughout his life. His adversaries saw this, along with the fact that he was a wartime king with added duties abandoned by his advisors, as grounds for his removal from power.

Henry VI's ill health and his advisors' corruption set the stage for the civil wars that would follow.

Between the nobles of the houses of York and Lancaster, there were clear feuds developing that came to a fore around 1453, when Henry's mental state deteriorated, leaving him incapable of even basic functions. A Council of Regency was established by Richard, Duke of York, which basically was an ad hoc





Henry VI, oil painting by an unknown artist; in the National Portrait Gallery, London.



Edward IV, portrait by an unknown artist; in the National Portrait Gallery, London



Henry VII, painting by an unknown artist, 1505

commission to take care of the government for Henry as he was unable. Richard was not only popular but also powerful. By 1455, he was able to remove Henry from power in a minor battle at St. Alban's. This was the first real conflict of the War of the Roses, the result of which was that Henry's wife, Margaret of Anjou, took power. In 1460, at the battle of Northampton, Henry was captured by the Yorkists and removed from the throne by Richard. In his place, Richard's son Edward IV was made King.

Edward IV's reign was seen as relatively peaceful, though the battles that led to his coronation saw tens of thousands of deaths. Lancastrian leaders had mostly been killed or removed from power. The general consensus amongst the populace was that Edward's successes were moving him and England in the direction of a rightful restoration of Yorkist rule.

It was planned that Edward would marry a French bride to ease tensions with the French. Regrettably, Edward secretly married Elizabeth Woodville in 1464. Friction mounted between Edward and The Lancasters, and in the wake of Edward's marriage, Margaret of Anjou formed an alliance with Louis XI of France. An unprepared Edward and a vengeful Margaret (accompanied by Warwick, himself a York) removed Edward from power briefly and restored Henry VI to the throne. Instead of returning to France, where she had been exiled after Henry's removal from power, Margaret went to Wales to join with Lancastrian followers. She encountered trouble in the town of Gloucester, though, and was forced into battle at Tewkesbury. It was here that her son Prince Edward, heir to the English crown, was killed. Henry VI was murdered shortly after by Yorkist powers in 1471 to fortify the Yorkists' hold on the throne.

Edward IV was restored to the throne in 1471, and peace thrived until 1483 when Edward suddenly died. Edward's younger brother Richard, now Duke of Gloucester, was named Protector of England by his brother on his deathbed. As caretaker for Edward's sons, Edward V and Richard, the Duke of Gloucester held them in the Tower of London for an interim period. During this time, Richard alleged that his brother's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was illegitimate and that his two sons were unlawful heirs to the throne. Publicly, Richard was seen as the greatest living Yorkist general, and his only opposition was a 12-year old boy who would have no capacity for self-rule. The fate of the two boys remains one of history's great mysteries, but it seems logical that their disappearance may have been part of a Yorkist plot to place Richard in line for the crown. All that is known is that the Princes in the Tower vanished and were never seen again.



The Lancastrians placed their hope on Henry Tudor, a half brother of the former King Henry VI. Richard III's reign lasted only two years, and in 1485, Henry Tudor defeated Richard's army at Bosworth Field after having gained Lancastrian support through Wales. After the battle he was crowned King Henry VII. Henry wisely married Elizabeth of York, reuniting the York and Lancaster houses, consolidating power to his throne, which he held until 1509. The rise of Henry Tudor marked the end of the War of the Roses.

The aftereffects of this period of civil wars were numerous. Perhaps most interesting was the fact that with so many casualties of the nobility, the extensive feudal powers in England dissolved. In place of feudal power, the merchant class saw a huge rise in power. In addition, consolidation of power under Henry VII's rule saw a merging of the English monarchy. Many of England's gains from France by Henry V in the Hundred Years' War were lost under Henry VI and never recovered.



The Two Princes Edward and Richard in the Tower, by Sir John Everett Millais (1483)

History as Propaganda

It has been thought throughout history that Shakespeare was something of a propagandist. Shakespeare was a major player in a key media outlet of the 16th century as a writer for the Tudor Court and was well aware of the fact that Queen Elizabeth I was a direct descendant of the man who overthrew Richard III.



The Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, c 1600.

There will always be a bit of controversy over why and how Richard got such a rotten reputation, but let's remember one very important piece of information: *Richard III* is a play. It's not, nor is it meant to be, a direct historical account of a King's reign. Instead, it's meant to promote the ideas and agenda of the Tudor Court. History should always be examined in the context of its authors. The sources that Shakespeare drew from in his research for *Richard III* were all Tudor historians who wrote under the rule of Tudor kings and queens. Even in the unlikely event that Shakespeare had wanted to write a play more sympathetic to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, such a work would have struggled to gain approval from the official censor, the Master of Revels.

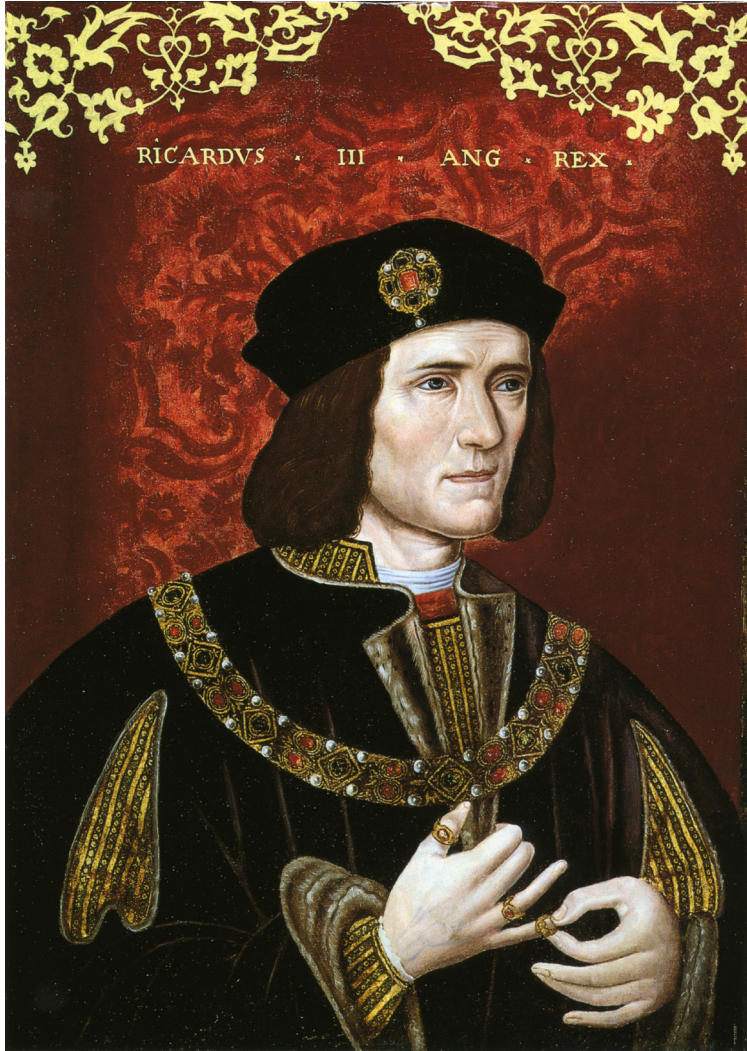
In addition, when the play was written (probably 1593), Elizabeth I was nearing the end of her life and reign; there were well-founded concerns about the future of the nation. Elizabeth had no children, and many feared a violent struggle over who would take her place.

This was the real-world drama that surrounded Shakespeare's London. It's also the most useful way of looking at *Richard III* as a 'history' play. On top of this, consider the recent history of the England in which Shakespeare lived: the country was still feeling the aftereffects of its bloody, brutal civil war, the War of the Roses, which lasted for thirty years (1455–1487).



Was Richard III Evil?

In both Shakespeare's *Richard III* and the Tudor histories, the king is noted as being physically "inferior." Shakespeare presents a person whose physical disability, and society's response to it, shapes, in a cruelly deterministic way, his fundamental identity, leaving him impotent in love and "determined to prove a villain." This Tudor vision of Richard was inherited through a line of Tudor historians including More, Grafton, Halle, and Holinshed.



Richard III, Anonymous

There is another Richard that is far less popular, and far less identifiable: the actual, historical Richard. Now, it's unfair to assume that any theatrical history ought to demand historical accuracy- if what we regard as "history" is an attempt at an unbiased account of a chronology of events, people, and experience. What we in modern times look to achieve by providing a "history" of something or someone is the truth: the facts or the realities of the time. In the case of a theatrical history, like that of *Richard III*, historical accuracy is less of a motivating factor. The nature of theater and of performance take the threads of a history and weave a dramatic narrative that is, in nature, artificial. A major question that arises out of *Richard III* is whether or not Shakespeare was looking to present Richard as an historical character- and if not, what his intentions and motivations may have been.

It's quite clear from historical accounts that Shakespeare was not only a popular playwright with the public, but that he also had the patronage of Elizabeth I. She was known to have attended performances of Shakespeare's acting troupe, Lord Chamberlain's Men, which her court funded.

To say that Shakespeare, like his Tudor counterparts, embellished on an already mythical Richard III is nearly irrefutable. Beyond the fact that the Tudor court of the time was likely pleased to see a not-so-distant enemy ruined by half-truths, there was some pressure on Shakespeare to satisfy the court. Even so, it's commonly known that Shakespeare was a proud Tudor, writing for a Tudor monarch, and used Tudor historians.

Because the Tudor dynasty succeeded Richard's Plantagenet dynasty as the ruling family in England, it's plausible that Shakespeare's 'history' was deliberately biased and his Richard a deliberate caricature of evil behavior. The way that Shakespeare went about this was by inventing and/or exacerbating a Tudor myth of Richard's congenital disability.

Maurice Hunt of Baylor University suggests that Richard's curved spine is a figurative reduction of all the war's strife amongst York and Lancaster factions boiled down into one destructive attribute. The cruelty and warped nature of war is thus placed on the shoulders of the man who is responsible for that war.



QUIZ:

WHO ARE YOU IN *RICHARD III*

1. IT'S MONDAY MORNING. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

- a. Grieving the weekend that is now lost.
- b. Laying the groundwork for Tuesday's schemes.
- c. Cursing my enemies.
- d. Regretting supporting the English civil war.
- e. Practicing one-liners.

2. AFTER SCHOOL, YOU CAN BE FOUND:

- a. At my locker, staring at a picture of my ex.
- b. Lurking.
- c. Hanging out with people I don't like.
- d. In the Tower.
- e. On the debate team.

3. YOU LIVE FOR:

- a. Memories.
- b. Power.
- c. England.
- d. Family.
- e. Comebacks.

4. HOW DO YOU GET YOUR GOSSIP?

- a. Instagram.
- b. Whispers.
- c. I don't gossip about people; people gossip about me.
- d. Gossip is mean.
- e. From my uncle.

5. FRIENDS CALL YOU:

- a. Strong.
- b. Cunning.
- c. "Queen."
- d. Loyal.
- e. Sassy.

6. HOW DO YOU APOLOGIZE?

- a. By getting married.
- b. With lies.
- c. Queens don't apologize.
- d. Sincerely.
- e. Wait—what did I do?

7. DESCRIBE YOUR DREAM DATE.

- a. A cozy night in.
- b. It's my birthday or something – everyone is celebrating me.
- c. Upscale and private, far from my enemies.
- d. A triple date with my siblings and their spouses.
- e. There's a lot of witty banter.

8. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HASHTAG?

- a. #unbreakable
- b. #feltcutemightdeletelater
- c. #bye
- d. #imsorry
- e. #airsigns

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:

- a. You are Lady Anne
- b. You are Richard III
- c. You are Queen Margaret
- d. You are George, Duke of Clarence
- e. You are Richard, Duke of York



IS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH? Yes, it is! But it's also poetry. Elizabethans used poetry for the same reason we still use it today: to express heightened states of emotion. So the language may be more densely packed with all those great rhetorical devices you learned in English class—metaphors, alliteration, irony—but it's definitely still English.

IS SHAKESPEARE HARDER FOR ACTORS TO PERFORM THAN REGULAR PLAYS? Actually, for most actors, Shakespeare is easier! The rhythm of the language makes it easy to memorize. (You know how song lyrics get stuck in your head, or how you can remember silly little rhymes from when you were a kid? It's like that.) And all those rhetorical devices act as clues to tell the actors how their character feels.

Shakespeare invented many words and phrases that we use on a regular basis today. Below are some examples.



Verse or Prose?

All of Shakespeare's language falls into one of two categories: verse or prose. Prose is what we think of as everyday speech, without specific rules regarding rhyme or rhythm. Verse, then, can be defined as giving order or form to the random stress patterns of prose.

A quick way to tell verse from prose: lines of verse begin with capital letters, while prose will appear in paragraph form.

Blank Verse

Blank Verse is the standard poetic form Shakespeare uses in his plays. It can also be defined as unrhymed iambic pentameter—that is, a line of poetry containing five ("penta" from the Greek prefix meaning five) iambic feet, not rhyming with any adjacent line. That's ten syllables all together. The pattern flows easily for speakers of English, because the stresses match the human heart beat:

ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM

or, a good way to remember the word "iamb" is to think of it as:

i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM

If you say, "The Yankees and the Mets are famous teams" with natural inflection, you will have spoken a line of iambic pentameter.

The YANK | ees AND | the METS | are FA | mous TEAMS

Here are two more:

I TAKE | the SUB | way EV | ery DAY | to SCHOOL

I CAN'T | go OUT | be CAUSE | my HOME | work's LATE

Now say a line from *Richard III*:

RICHARD III

But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

But WHAT'S | the MA | tter CLA | rence MAY | i KNOW?

A repeating combination of stressed and unstressed syllables is known as a foot, which is the basic unit of verse. An iamb is a foot of poetry containing two syllables, with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: ta DUM.

Prose

Prose is the everyday language used then and now. Since verse was the conventional method of writing in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare was actually pushing the literary boundaries by including prose in his plays.

At first glance, it may seem that Shakespeare used verse and prose to indicate a character's status (rich, powerful, educated characters speak in verse; poor, common fools speak in prose) but upon closer look, you'll find that many characters go back and forth between verse and prose, and they do so at very specific moments in the play.

Actors pay close attention to when characters speak in verse and when they speak in prose because Shakespeare made these choices on purpose, and it can tell the actor a lot about how their character thinks and feels.

How does your language change depending on who you are speaking to, or what you are speaking about? Where else do you see characters doing this in this play, and what does it tell you about their relationships, and about their opinions?



Irregular Verse

Shakespeare doesn't always write verse in perfect iambic pentameter. The rhythmic patterns change, and so do the number of syllables. This was pretty innovative stuff in Shakespeare's day. He was one of the first writers to regularly break form. Just like a change from prose to verse is a clue for the actor, so is a variation in the verse pattern.

Shared Lines & Split Lines

Shakespeare sometimes splits a line of verse, so that two characters share the ten syllables. This is called a shared line or a split line, and it helps to show quick thinking or strong emotion, as well as creating a sense of accelerated action. Thus we have both the effect of poetry AND of natural speech.

Have a look at these lines shared by Richard and the Murderers he has engaged to execute his brother George, Duke of Clarence.

RICHARD

Go, go, dispatch.

MURDERS

We will, my noble lord.

They scan as:

go GO | dis PATCH | we WILL | my NO | ble LORD

Shared lines create a realistic pattern of speech when emotions run especially high. **Where else in the play might you expect to find shared lines? How might the timing of shared lines create suspense in a play like *Richard III*?**

Feminine Endings

A "feminine ending" is a line of verse that ends with an unstressed extra syllable. The result is that the rhythm of the verse is thrown off just enough to indicate that the characters feel unsettled about something. An angry Queen Margaret uses a feminine ending as she finishes laying a curse on the House of York:

QUEEN MARGARET

Thou rag of honor, thou detested—

RICHARD

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard!

If Richard had allowed Margaret to finish, her line would have scanned as:

thou RAG | of HO | nor THOU | de TEST | ed RICH | ard

but instead, Richard interjects, replacing what he knows will be his name with hers, to taunt her.

thou RAG | of HO | nor THOU | de TEST | ed MAR | g'ret
RICH ard |

This is both an example of a feminine ending and a split line. Tensions are extremely high, and this exchange takes place early in the play, signaling more venom to come.



Other Types of Poetry

Shakespeare employs many types of meter in addition to iambs. For example, a trochee is the exact opposite of an iamb: TA dum. Compared to an iamb, this feels surprisingly unnatural to speakers of the English language, so Shakespeare often uses trochees for his supernatural characters (the witches in *Macbeth*; Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). He also inserts it into regular lines of iambic pentameter for effect.

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare begins the play with a famous trochaic first line:

RICHARD

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York

NOW is | the WIN | ter OF | our DIS | con TENT
made GLO | rious SUM | mer BY | this SON | of YORK

Richard, one of Shakespeare's greatest villains, is so treacherous and immoral that he uses trochees frequently, whether conniving in secret or feigning gentleness with others. His speech lends his sociopathic deeds an almost supernatural eloquence.

Where else do trochees appear in *Richard III*? How might an actor take these trochees as a cue from Shakespeare?

Missing Feet and Silence

Shakespeare writes in iambic pentameter, which means there are five poetic feet per line: ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM. If a line is short, we say it is "missing feet". This interrupts the flow of the poetry, and forces the actors to find meaning in a moment of silence. When Richard attempts to woo Lady Anne over the dead body of her father-in-law, whom he himself killed, Anne is so incredulous that she asks him to confirm what she already knows to be true.

ANNE

Didst thou not kill this king?
Didst THOU | not KILL | this KING

RICHARD

I grant you. –
i GRANT | you – |

For once, Richard is at a loss for words. He cannot deny the truth of Anne's accusation, but he does not yet have an answer to justify the deed.



Rhyming Couplets

When two lines of poetry rhyme, it creates a sense of finality for the listener. Characters will often speak in rhyme when it's the end of an act or they've made a decision. Rhyme is also used in songs and prophecies. For example, George, Duke of Clarence explains to his brother Richard that a prophecy has led to his imprisonment:

CLARENCE

And says a wizard told him that by "G"
His issue disinherited should BE.

and SAYS | a WI | zard TOLD | him THAT | by "G"
his ISS | ue DIS | in HE | ri TED | should BE

At the end of the same scene, after Clarence has been taken away to the Tower, Richard uses rhyme to bring his fantasies of future power to heel so that he may continue to move with deadly focus towards the crown.

RICHARD

Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and REIGNS.
When they are gone, then must I count my GAINS.

CLA rence | still BREATHES | ED ward | still LIVES | and REIGNS
when THEY | are GONE | THEN must | i COUNT | my GAINS

When you see a rhyme in the text, read that section aloud and think about why Shakespeare might have made that choice when he was writing. **How does speaking the rhyme make you, as the character, feel?**







PART THREE:

BEHIND THE SCENES

SHAKESPEARE SCORECARD

Keep track of the action in *Richard III* like you would in a baseball game! Use the chart below to score the major actions of the characters during the performance. Adapted from *Shakespeare for Dummies* by CSC’s Artistic Director John Doyle.

	Falls in love	C	Casts or references a curse		Talks about a bad dream
	Wrongfully Imprisoned	T	Trusts the wrong person	•	Appears in scene
X	Killed by or because of Richard III		Talks about a Horse	“	Famous quote

Act	1				2				3							4					5				
Scene	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Richard, Duke of Gloucester																									
Lady Anne																									
George, Duke of Clarence																									
Queen Elizabeth																									
Queen Margaret																									
King Edward VI																									
Buckingham																									
Hastings																									
Stanley																									
Catesby																									
Duke of York																									
Prince Edward																									
Cardinal																									



PART FOUR:

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOURCES

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

by Rex Gibson

Shakespeare for Dummies

by John Doyle (CSC Artistic Director) and Ray Lischner

The Friendly Shakespeare

by Norrie Epstein

The Genius of Shakespeare

by Jonathan Bate

Brush Up Your Shakespeare!

by Michael Macrone

Essential Shakespeare Handbook

by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding

William Shakespeare and The Globe

written and illustrated by Alikì

Eye Witness Shakespeare

written by Peter Chrisp, photographed by Steve Teague

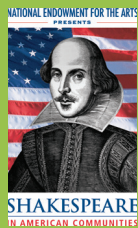
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Classic Stage Company (CSC) is the award-winning Off-Broadway theater committed to reimagining the classical repertory for contemporary audiences. Founded in 1967, CSC uses works of the past as a way to engage in the issues of today. Highly respected and widely regarded as a major force in American theater, it has become the home to New York's finest established and emerging artists, the place where they gather to grapple with the great works of the world's repertory.



The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest presents *Shakespeare in American Communities*. CSC is one of 40 professional theater companies selected to participate in bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the twelfth year of this national program, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.



Council on the Arts

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