



RICHARD III

Stratford
FESTIVAL

2022 STUDY GUIDE



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By **William Shakespeare**

Directed by **Antoni Cimolino**

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS SPONSORED BY



Tools for Teachers includes Prologues,
Study Guides and Stratford Shorts.

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CONTENT ADVISORY

The play deals with issues of oppression and misogyny. It depicts violence and murder.

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

7+

SYNOPSIS

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, contemplates his prospects now that a period of civil war in England ("the winter of our discontent") has ended with the victory of his faction, the House of York; the murder of the former king, Henry VI, at Richard's own hands; and the ascent to the throne of Richard's eldest brother, Edward IV ("this son of York"). Richard, anticipating the sickly Edward's early demise, is already plotting to eliminate all those who stand between himself and the crown.

He begins with his other brother, George, Duke of Clarence, whom he contrives to have imprisoned and then murdered. Meanwhile, he uses different means to neutralize a bitter enemy: Lady Anne, widowed daughter-in-law of the murdered King Henry. Interrupting Henry's funeral procession, he uses his extraordinary powers of persuasion not only to win the lady over but subsequently to marry her.

When Edward dies, Richard removes the deceased monarch's two young sons and heirs to the Tower of London, ostensibly for their protection. In his capacity as Lord Protector, he executes several other potential threats on trumped-up charges of treason. Meanwhile, his confederate the Duke of Buckingham has orchestrated a campaign of lies, alleging the illegitimacy of the princes in the Tower. When Richard is offered the crown instead, he accepts it with a great show of reluctance.

Richard's next step will be to murder the young princes – but even as he works to consolidate his power, it begins to slip away from him, as his ruthlessness alienates all around him, including those he has relied on most.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Global Competencies
 - ◆ Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- Grades 7-8
 - ◆ The Arts
 - ◆ Health and Physical Education
 - ◆ Language
- Grades 9-12
 - ◆ The Arts
 - ◆ Canadian and World Studies
 - ◆ English
 - ◆ Health and Physical Education
- Grades 11-12
 - ◆ Social Sciences and Humanities

THEMES

- Ambition, Alliances and Jealousy
- The Compelling Power of Language
- Disability and Representation
- Fate and Free Will
- Leadership, Power and Responsibility
- Manipulation, Deceit and Betrayal
- Succession and the Path to Power
- Temptation and Evil
- Violence as a Means to an End

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

- Is ambition a positive or a negative quality in a person? Explain your position.
- How would you define a villain? Explain your definition.
- Why are we drawn to villainous characters in theatre and other forms of media and entertainment? What makes them so compelling?
- Are there characters in the media or in real life who are considered power-hungry? What characteristics do they have in common?
- Have you ever been in a situation where one person strongly held a viewpoint and then someone persuaded them to change their mind? What persuasive techniques did they use to change the other person's mind?
- Does a strong political leader need to be cunning and willing to do anything for the good of the people? Why or why not?
- A popular saying is: "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

- Who did you find yourself rooting for in the play? Why do you think this was the case?
- In what ways does the play conform to conventional and problematic notions of disabled people? In what ways does it resist this thinking?
- Shakespeare wrote four prominent female characters in *Richard III*: Queen Elizabeth, Lady Anne, Queen Margaret and the Duchess of York. How has the role of women changed since Shakespeare wrote the play? What did you think of their portrayal in this production? What still needs to be done in order to achieve gender equality with regard to representation?
- Do the ends ever justify the means? How does Richard justify his quest for power? What do you think explains his ability to commit the evil acts you see in the play?
- How is Richard able to manipulate those around him and hold onto his power? What tactics does he employ?
- How does Shakespeare's version of events connect to real world history? Why do you think Shakespeare created historical plays?

MINDS ON

OBJECTIVE

This exercise introduces students to *Richard III* as a historical person and invites them to consider the relationship between historical truth and fictional storytelling.

MATERIALS

How King Richard III's Remains Were Discovered and Confirmed (0:00-6:30 recommended, 10:12 total runtime), computer access and/or paper and writing utensils.

DIRECTIONS

- Watch the video about how King Richard III's remains were discovered with your students (stopping at the 6:30 mark).
- Lead a class discussion using these prompts:
 - ◆ Why do you think finding Richard III's bones was so significant? What stories can they tell us?
 - ◆ Were you surprised by Richard III's connection to Canada? Does this change how relevant you think staging the play here is? Why or why not?
- Ask students to think of a real person, place or thing which has since become mythic or legendary (e.g. Cleopatra, The Trojan War, Pocahontas, etc.). What do you know to be true about it/them? What do you imagine is fiction? Why?
 - ◆ For example: Popular media often depicts Cleopatra as relying on her famed beauty and romantic relationships to secure her power, when she is actually thought by historians to have been a legitimate strategist and political thinker in her own right >>[Link to Media](#)

POSSIBLE EXTENSION

- Ask students to create a T-Chart comparing truth and fiction about their chosen focus. To do so, they will need to conduct additional research.

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

- Richard III is both a legendary historical figure and a legendary fictional character. Why do you think we are particularly interested in stories that blur the line between fiction and reality? Should this line be flexible? Why or why not?

STUDY GUIDES

Study Guides for all 2022 plays are available free of charge online on our website:

>> [Link to Study Guides](#)

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS, CHATS AND TOURS

STUDENT MATINEES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Tuesday, May 10th
- Tuesday, May 17th
- Tuesday, May 24th
- Friday, June 3rd
- Wednesday, June 8th
- Wednesday, June 15th
- Tuesday, June 21st
- Wednesday, October 12th
- Tuesday, October 18th
- Friday, October 28th

WORKSHOPS, CHATS AND TOURS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops, Chats and Tours (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

CONNECTION TO THE ARCHIVES

In this >>[video](#), the Stratford Festival Archives Staff explores the history of *Richard III* at the Stratford Festival, shares findings from the play's composite script, and discusses Richard III as both an historical person and a character in Shakespeare's play. When you come to the show, you can also explore a reproduction of the coronation robes worn by the character of Richard in our 1953 production. This costume is on display in the lobby of the Tom Patterson Theatre.

How might exploring artifacts from past productions of *Richard III* help you get ready to see this season's production?

There are many reasons why a director would look at an archival composite script for a play. Why might a student or teacher find it useful to consult one?

The Stratford Festival Archives maintains, conserves and protects records about the Festival and makes these materials available to people around the world. Their collection contains material ranging from 1952 right up to the present and includes administrative documents, production records, photographs, design artwork, scores, audio-visual recordings, promotional materials, costumes, props, set decorations and much more. These materials are collected and preserved with the aim of documenting the history of the Festival, preserving the page-to-stage process, and capturing the creative processes involved in numerous other activities that contribute to the Festival each season. In addition to visiting the Archives in person, you can explore a selection of their holdings via their online catalogue.



Alec Guinness as Richard III in *Richard III*, 1953. Directed by Tyrone Guthrie. Designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch. Photograph by Peter Smith. Stratford Festival Archives, GPO.1953.002.0261



Maggie Smith as Queen Elizabeth and Bob Baker as Dorset in *Richard III*, 1977. Directed by Robin Phillips. Designed by Daphne Dare. Photograph by Zoe Dominic. Stratford Festival Archives, GPO.1977.009.2046

RESOURCES

HOUSE PROGRAM – RICHARD III

>> [Link to Resource](#)

IN SEARCH OF THE REAL RICHARD III

>> [Link to Resource](#)

SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD III SHOWS US HOW TO RESIST TYRANNY

>> [Link to Resource](#)

RICHARD III - SOLVING A 500 YEAR OLD MYSTERY

>> [Link to Resource](#)

RICHARD III AND THE STAGING OF DISABILITY

>> [Link to Resource](#)

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