



# ABOUT THIS PACK

This is the first of **THREE** teachers' packs supporting the RSC's 2013 production of Richard II, directed by Artistic Director Gregory Doran, which will open on 10 October at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

THE DIRECTOR'S PROCESS

The packs are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students participating in the broadcast of Richard II to UK schools on **Friday 15 November at 9.30am**, although activities can be adapted for students in different age groups. Each pack will explore the process of one of the artists at the heart of the production.

This first pack focusses on the early process of the Director, Gregory Doran, as he introduces the context of the play to the Richard II company. It will be followed by further packs that will explore language and design.

The words of the Director are used throughout this pack and are indicated in red italics.

### THE DIRECTOR'S PROCESS

"My approach is to cast the very best actors I can, and discover in the rehearsal room how that group of actors understand the play and how as a group, alive to the world around us today, we interpret that play now"

At the start of the six week rehearsal period, Gregory Doran opens up Richard II by inviting the company to explore and interpret the world of the play. During the first few weeks of rehearsals the company will be introduced to the social and historical context of the play, its key themes and verse and narrative structures.

Every Director's process is unique. This pack aims to give you an insight into the very start of Greg's journey into Richard II and we hope it will provide some useful starting points for you and your students. Throughout this pack you will find quotes and insights from the Director as well as references to the first of our production diaries which can be found at: <a href="http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary.aspx">http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary.aspx</a>.



## ABOUT YOUNG SHAKESPEARE NATION



Over the next six years, the RSC will stage the 36 plays that make up the First Folio of Shakespeare's work. RSC Education invites you to join us on this inspirational journey in a new initiative called Young Shakespeare Nation.

Whether you want to teach a new play or teach in a new way, Young Shakespeare Nation can give you the tools and resources you need.

- Find inspiration online with images, video's, more teachers' packs and resources at <a href="http://www.rsc.org.uk/education">www.rsc.org.uk/education</a>
- Participate in our schools broadcast series, staring with Richard II on 15 November
- Explore a new text or a new way of teaching through our CPD programme
- Try one of our range of courses for teachers and students in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Find out more at <a href="http://www.rsc.org.uk/education">www.rsc.org.uk/education</a>

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#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN BRIEF

*Richard II* was written and first performed in 1595 or 1596. Drawing primarily on the historical source of Holinshed's Chronicles, Shakespeare's play charts the downfall of King Richard II and his deposition at the hands of Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV.

Although the play depicts an earlier period in English History, the play and its themes had a strong resonance in Shakespeare's England. So much so that some years after its first performance, when the Earl of Essex led a rebellion against Queen Elizabeth I, Essex's followers commissioned a private performance of the play the evening before they armed themselves and made their move on the palace.

The rebellion was quashed and Essex was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered following the uprising. Shakespeare and his men were questioned about the uprising, but managed to convince their interrogators of their innocence and so avoided a similar fate.



# THE CONTEXT OF THE COURT

On the first day of rehearsals Gregory Doran talks to the cast about the importance of the context in which Richard and his court would have existed. Greg shares a range of reference books with the company, including contemporary chronicles and recent academic writings, which have formed part of his research into the play. These will be displayed on a table in the rehearsal room for the remaining weeks. Greg also looks at specific passages from some of these accounts to stimulate discussion around the figure of Richard II.

The following activities and discussions are designed to help you and your students become more familiar with the historical figure of Richard II and the context in which the play is set.



# ACTIVITY 1: WHAT KIND OF KING?

Look at 'The Wilton Diptych' in the Resource materials. This altar piece depicting Richard was commissioned by the king himself and shows how he wanted to be represented. Richard even chose to take it with him during his campaign in Ireland. This picture also inspired some of the early staging choices in this production.

- In Pairs, ask students to study the image of Richard. Encourage them to think of:
  - $\circ$   $\,$  One word that Richard might choose to describe himself  $\,$
  - $\circ$  One word his courtiers might have used to describe him
  - $\circ$  One word his people might have used to describe him
  - $\circ$  One word his friends might have used to describe him
- Invite students to discuss what his court might be like. If this is how he chose to be presented how do they imagine he would have wanted to be treated?
- This activity can be developed by looking at still images of Richard II from past RSC productions to gain an insight into how different actors and directors have interpreted him. These are accessible through our family tree, which will be available on the RSC website in preparation for the broadcast: www.rsc.org.uk/education

Within the first two weeks of rehearsals Gregory Doran also takes the company to Westminster Hall, Westminster Abbey and the National Gallery in London to look at the Wilton Diptych in person. It was Richard II who transformed Westminster Hall during his reign, which was one of the reasons his followers were able to accuse him of being frivolous. Their visit can be seen in the production diaries at: <a href="http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary.aspx">http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary.aspx</a>.





## RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The way in which the King and his subjects interact during this play might be difficult for us to understand. At the same time as Shakespeare was writing the majority of people believed in God and, more importantly, believed God appointed the King as his representative on earth. This belief is referred to as 'The Divine Right of Kings'.



There are a number of useful websites that can help with research on this important concept which students may benefit from: <a href="http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/takingliberties/staritems/55hobbesleviathan.html">http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/takingliberties/staritems/55hobbesleviathan.html</a> <a href="http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/166626/divine-right-of-kings">http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/takingliberties/staritems/55hobbesleviathan.html</a> <a href="http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/166626/divine-right-of-kings">http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/166626/divine-right-of-kings</a> After looking at the theory, take another look at the Diptych and encourage students to reflect on any 'Divine' influences they can see.

Introduce the idea that King Richard II, historically, was 10 when he was proclaimed King. How might this experience of being King from an early age have influenced his belief in his 'Divine Right' to rule?

# THE POWER OF VERSE

As Richard II is a lyric tragedy, written in what Gregory Doran terms "the most beautiful language ever written", he chooses to highlight the power and importance of verse through asking every member of the company to bring a poem of particular significance to them to each rehearsal session. The cast will then use these poems for warm up activities, to focus themselves on language and also to form a collection which celebrates the value of verse as a form of expression.

Richard II is written entirely in verse, with no prose. The following activity is designed to help students appreciate the impact of verse in terms of delivery and expression.



Invite students to emulate the Richard II company and each bring in one poem of their choice; either poems that are important to them or which evoke a particular memory. Alternatively, students could use a prescribed poem.

- Ask students to share their poems in pairs or small groups, reading through the whole poem aloud and listening to one another.
- As they listen to one another, students should select one line from each poem that stands out to them as a listener.
- Encourage students to express how and why these particular lines have a special impact. Are there devices or techniques in use in these lines? Encourage them to listen for audible features such as rhyme, alliteration, percussive or explosive sounds and repetition.



- Ask each group/pair to prepare a 30 second dramatisation of their chosen lines, in which they speak the line and physicalise it at the same time. Watch each group perform their lines, asking them to explain why they felt it stood out from the rest of the poem. Did the sounds change their movements?
- Ask students to reflect on why Shakespeare may have chosen to write this play entirely in verse? Explain that it was an unusual choice for the time as well, as most playwrights used a combination of verse and prose. What are the advantages of using verse? What might the impact be?

# WHY RICHARD II NOW?

Before the rehearsal process begins a director will begin to form their own views and opinions about what the text has to say to a contemporary audience. You can hear Gregory Doran discussing the relevance of Richard II in the production diaries.

"Richard II is, on one level, a great morality play about the last of the medieval kings and, on another level, it's a play about regime change. It's a play about rulers who have to come to terms with losing a grip on a power that they believe is their god given right and others who want to seize that power under the pretext of it being for the national good and that seems to be a story that has a lot of resonance in the world today."

While the poetic language used may be different, Richard II has a very modern message. The following activity and discussion points are designed to help students discover this relevance.

## ACTIVITY 3: QUALITIES OF A KING

For this activity, exploring the nature of leadership, you will need a large clear space.

- Give students individual slips of paper, each with different qualities on them (using the 'Qualities of a King' sheet in the Resource materials). Ask students to move to different sides of the room depending on whether or not they think that quality would make them:
  - A good/bad leader
  - A good/bad soldier
  - A good/bad husband
  - A good/bad cousin OR relation
- Ask people to sit down or stand up depending on whether or not they think their quality could contribute to the <u>ideal</u> leader and question a number of students as to why and what might happen if a leader did/did not have that quality.
- Explain that Richard II, at its heart, is a story about a struggle for power and leadership between two men with very different qualities: Richard and Bolingbroke (who are cousins). Show students which of the two men each quality could be attributed to



(Bolingbroke's qualities are in bold and Richard's are in italics). Ask the students what they think would happen to a leader with each combination of qualities.

- Invite students to consider whether it is better to have a leader who THINKS or one who ACTS? Can they think of any other leaders in History/modern day who are similar to either of these two characters? What might be the issues faced by a leader like Richard II in a court?
- Finally, ask students to discuss how the setting of Richard II is relevant today. Encourage them to discuss other possible settings where these same struggles might be appropriate – when do we have the right to 'remove' a leader?



#### RICHARD II IN ELIZABETH'S REIGN

While Richard II is a character from history for us, he was also historical to Shakespeare and his audience. The story of Richard's 'deposition' (or losing his crown) was around 200 years old in Shakespeare's day, when Elizabeth I was on the throne.

"For Shakespeare History is both a warning and a prophecy and I think that's a very dangerous thing too in Elizabethan England and a play like Richard II essentially could have brought the company into very hot water; they were asked to do a special performance of Richard II, which they hadn't played for years, on the eve of the Essex rebellion and indeed were hauled up before the authorities after that disastrous coup plot and Elizabeth I herself said famously "know ye not, I am Richard II". So it is a play that uses history as a metaphor for the present day."

Shakespeare was being highly controversial in allowing his audiences to question the right of a monarch to rule, and the scene where Richard II loses his crown may have even been removed. This may be a good opportunity for students to research the Essex Rebellion and the way in which the play Richard II was involved in it.

# THE DEATH OF GLOUCESTER

As rehearsals progress Gregory Doran explains to the company that Shakespeare's audiences would have been very familiar with royal history. Their understanding would have come from seeing plays by contemporary writers rather than books. As a result, Gregory Doran chooses to complete a read through of the anonymous play 'Thomas of Woodstock' (who was the Duke of Gloucester) to reveal how the audience of the time would have already perceived Richard, his uncles and his followers.

## WHO WAS GLOUCESTER?

The Duke of Gloucester was the Uncle of both Richard II and Bolingbroke. Whilst we never see Gloucester in the play, his death is the subject of the argument that unfolds in its opening scene. To a modern audience, this can be confusing but Shakespeare's audiences would have known about Gloucester's death from other plays of the period. 'Thomas of Woodstock', also known as 'Richard II part 1', is one such play. You can find a copy of it at: <u>http://www.thealexandrian.net/creations/theater/r2-</u> woodstock/Richard2-Woodstock-ASR-Script.pdf



# TELLING THE STORY

After introducing context, the first thing that Gregory Doran does with the company is to read through the script, inviting the actors to translate each line into modern English and discuss possible interpretations. He does this in order to build their confidence with the story and develop a shared understanding of the text. This is done with the whole company seated round a table. Greg tasks people to read parts that are not their own and share ideas.

Before going any further you may also choose to familiarise your students with the story using the following synopsis and activity.

# SYNOPSIS

As the production opens an online version of the play's synopsis will be available at: <a href="http://www.rsc.org.uk">http://www.rsc.org.uk</a>

# ACTIVITY 4: FREEZE, ANIMATE, FREEZE

This activity is an active way of telling the story of the play through animating its key moments. It will help to clarify what really happens to Richard II during the course of the play and also help students to understand the consequences of important moments in the play. Use 'Freeze, Animate, Freeze' in the Resource materials.

- Explain the activity to students: they will be asked to volunteer to take the parts of characters in the short scenes. For each scene, they will create a 'freeze frame' for the opening moment. Tell students to arrange themselves how they think the characters would be positioned at the beginning of the scene, paying particular attention to facial expressions, gestures etc.
- Then play out the scene, using the dialogue provided.
- At the end of each short scene they freeze again, capturing the closing moment or consequence of the scene's action.
- Work through all of the sequences, in order, as a whole group.



# RESOURCES





# QUALITIES OF A KING

Detached	Vain	Easily led	Arrogant
Ambitious	Greedy	Indecisive	Self-Righteous
Analytical	Eloquent	Clear Thinking	Deluded
Loyal	Strong willed	Ruthless	Just
Avenging	Bitter	Persuasive	Commanding



#### FREEZE, ANIMATE, FREEZE

#### All text Edited by RSC Education

#### 1. FREEZE-FRAME:

The court watches on as **Bolingbroke** and **Mowbray** stand before **King Richard** who has said he will listen to their issues with each other. **ANIMATE:** 

Bolingbroke:	Thomas Mowbray, I do turn to thee
	Thou art a traitor and a miscreant…
	(To the King)he did plot the duke of Gloucester's death
Mowbray:	I do defy him, and I spit at him,
	Call him a slanderous coward and a villain
King Richard:	Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
	At Coventry upon St Lambert's day:
	There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
	The swelling difference of your settled hate.

FREEZE.

#### 2. FREEZE-FRAME:

The **Duchess of Gloucester** confronts **John of Gaunt**. She is angry about his lack of action against her husband's killer (who Gaunt believes is the King). **ANIMATE:** 

Duchess:	pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.	
	What shall I say? To safeguard thine own life,	
	The best way is to avenge my Gloucester's death.	
Gaunt:	Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift	
	An angry arm against his minister.	

#### FREEZE.

3. FREEZE-FRAME:

Mowbray and Bolingbroke prepare to fight each other for honour, but King Richard stops them.

#### ANIMATE:

King Richard:	We banish you our territories.
Bolingbroke:	Your will be done.
Mowbray:	A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege.

FREEZE.

#### 4. FREEZE-FRAME:

John of Gaunt lies on his death bed, begging Richard to let his son come home from exile.

ANIMATE:

Gaunt:	Since thou dost seek to kill my name in me,
	I mock my name, great king, to flatter thee.
King Richard:	Should dying men flatter those that live?
Gaunt:	No, no, men living flatter those that die.

FREEZE.



#### 5. FREEZE-FRAME:

Bushy, Bagot and Green (The King's followers) comfort the Queen who feels something is wrong now Richard has left for Ireland. Then York arrives to tell them that people are likely to rise up and fight with Bolingbroke, who has come back. ANIMATE:

York: Gentlemen, go muster up your men. (exit YORK and QUEEN together) Green: Well, I will for refuge straight to Bristol Castle. Bagot: I will to Ireland. Bushy: As York thrives to beat back Bolingbroke…

# FREEZE.

#### 6. FREEZE-FRAME:

**Bolingbroke**, back from exile, and **Northumberland** (a supporter of Bolingbroke's) meet with **York** on their campaign and he confronts Bolingbroke, his traitorous nephew. **ANIMATE:** 

Bolingbroke:	My gracious uncle —
York:	Tut, tut! Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle. I am
	no traitor's uncle.
Bolingbroke:	My Father's goods are all distrained and sold… what would
	you have me do?
York:	It may be that I will go with you

#### FREEZE.

#### 7. FREEZE-FRAME:

**Bolingbroke** finds Richard's followers, **Bushy and Green**, and has them brought before him to be sentenced before the King is even back in England. **ANIMATE:** 

Bushy:	More welcome is the stroke of death to me
	Than Bolingbroke to England
Green:	My comfort is that heaven will take our souls
	And plague injustice with the pains of hell
Bolingbroke:	My Lord Northumberland, see them dispatched -

FREEZE.

#### 8. FREEZE-FRAME:

**Richard** arrives back in England from his fighting in Ireland with his followers, including York's son **Aumerle** and **Scroop**, and despairs of the rebellion he has heard of.

#### ANIMATE:

King Richard:	Say, is my Kingdom lost? Why, 'twas my care,
	And what loss is it to be rid of care?
	Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?
	Greater he shall not be.
Aumerle:	Where is the duke my father, with his power?
Scroop:	Your uncle York is joined with Bolingbroke

FREEZE.



#### 9. FREEZE-FRAME:

After negotiation Richard has returned to London and **Bolingbroke** summons **Richard** to parliament and asks him to hand over his crown in front of everyone. **ANIMATE:** 

> Bolingbroke: Are you contented to resign the crown? King Richard: With mine own tears I wash away my balm, With mine own hands I give away my crown, With mine own tongue deny my sacred state, With mine own breath release all duteous oaths

#### FREEZE.

#### 10. FREEZE-FRAME:

York has just discovered his son, Aumerle, has tried to help Richard (who is now imprisoned) and is very angry at him but the Duchess of York appeals to Bolingbroke to forgive her son.

#### ANIMATE:

Duchess of York:	O, happy vantage of a kneeling knee! Yet I am sick for fear: speak it again,
	Twice saying 'pardon' doth not pardon twain, But makes one pardon strong.
Bolingbroke:	I pardon him with all my heart.

## FREEZE.

#### 11. FREEZE-FRAME:

In Pomfret castle, where **Richard** is locked away, he questions his role in life now he is no longer a 'king' and is attacked by **a group of men** – Bolingbroke's followers. **ANIMATE:** 

King Richard: *(is stabbed)* That hand shall burn in never-quenching fire That staggers thus my person... Mount, mount, my soul! Thy seat is up on high, Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die. *Dies* 

FREEZE.

#### 12. FREEZE-FRAME:

**Bolingbroke** has learnt of Richard's death and is extremely upset. He never wanted Richard dead.

ANIMATE:

Bolingbroke:

I thank thee not, for thou hast wrought A deed of slaughter with thy fatal hand Upon my head and all this famous land

#### FREEZE.

#### THE END

