



RICHARD III

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PACK

Richard III, directed for the RSC by Roxana Silbert, is part of the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival.

Roxana and Ti Green, the production's designer, were keen to explore the dynamic of private conversations taking place in public, on the streets of London. The company also needed to learn about the complex web of historical characters and their relationships, in order to make sense of them for their audiences.

This pack responds to ideas directly from Roxana's rehearsal room and suggests activities that you might use with your students in the classroom. They can be used either as stand-alone practical approaches to this play or as supporting activities for students seeing the production. They have been designed with KS3 to KS5 students in mind, but can be adapted for other age groups. Some are best suited to an open space such as a hall, but many can be used in a classroom.

ABOUT OUR EDUCATION WORK

We want children and young people to enjoy the challenge of Shakespeare and achieve more as a result of connecting with his work. Central to our education work is our manifesto for Shakespeare in schools, *Stand up for Shakespeare*. We know that children and young people can experience Shakespeare in ways that excite, engage and inspire them. We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare when they:

- Do Shakespeare on their feet - exploring the plays actively as actors do
- See it Live - participate as members of a live audience
- Start it Earlier - work on the plays from a younger age

We also believe in the power of ensemble: a way of working together in both the rehearsal room and across the company enabling everyone's ideas and voices to be heard. Artistic Director, Michael Boyd encapsulates this vision for ensemble in his rehearsal room where actors are encouraged to try out different interpretations of scenes before deciding together on what will be presented to an audience in the final performance.

CONTENTS

Background - fact, fiction, unknown	Page 2
Staging the York & Lancaster family trees	Page 4
Playing against the backdrop of London	Page 5
Private conversations / public spaces	Page 5
Saying yes - how & why Lady Anne is persuaded	Page 7
Interview with actor Jonjo O'Neill (Richard)	Page 10

These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Contextual notes from the 2012 production



ACTIVITY

A classroom or open space activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses



Visit www.rsc.org.uk/education/resources for more resources on *Richard III* including:

- Teachers' activity pack based on the 2007 production of *Richard III* directed by Michael Boyd
- Images, videos and information about past productions in the Resource Bank

BACKGROUND – FACT, FICTION, UNKNOWN



Richard III is based on real events and characters. However, Shakespeare wrote the play during the reign of Elizabeth I, the grand-daughter of Henry VII (referred to as 'Richmond' in the play). For a mixture of dramatic and political reasons, Shakespeare chose to make Richard III a villain, while glorifying Henry VII.



Oscar Pearce as James Tyrrel and Alex Waldman as Sir Catesby in the 2012

FACT, FICTION OR UNKNOWN?

In the rehearsal room, Roxana's company spent time researching the historical background to the play. You might find it useful to look through the list of points on the following page with your students. You could use the list as a quiz - read out each of the bullet point sentences (in a random order) and ask them if it's fact, fiction or unknown.

Or you could use the information as the basis for a class discussion - why did Shakespeare create the character of Richard III in the way that he did?



The *Richard III* company in rehearsal for the 2012 production

FACT

- The play is set during a period of history known as The Wars of the Roses.
- Richard III and his elder brother, Edward IV, belong to the House of York, whose symbol is a white rose.
- Their enemies belong to the House of Lancaster, whose symbol is a red rose.
- Richard helped his brother defeat the Lancastrians.
- A third brother, George Duke of Clarence, supported the Lancastrians and was executed for treason.
- Edward IV and his wife Elizabeth had three children: Prince Edward, the eldest and heir to the throne; Prince Richard and Princess Elizabeth.
- Edward died in 1483, leaving Richard as protector of the realm for the young Prince Edward.
- The validity of Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth was questioned, suggesting that their children were illegitimate. As a result, Richard became king, rather than Prince Edward.
- Richard married Anne, widow of the son of Henry VI, Edward Prince of Wales.
- Anne died of tuberculosis in March 1485, aged 28.
- Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in August 1485.
- Henry, Earl of Richmond became Henry VII.
He was the first of the Tudors, the family that reigned until the death of Elizabeth I in 1603.
- Shakespeare probably wrote the play some time between 1592 and 1594.

FICTION

Shakespeare's Richard III:

- Is hunch-backed with a withered arm and a limp.
- Is directly responsible for the death of his brother, George, Duke of Clarence.
- Initiates the rumours that his brother Edward's marriage was invalid and his children illegitimate.
- Orders the murder of Edward's sons, the two young princes in the tower.
- Poisons his wife, Queen Anne.

(There is no historical basis for any of the above.)

UNKNOWN

- The circumstances of the death of the young princes Edward and Richard is a mystery. How and when did they die? This has never been established and has been the cause of fascination and speculation for hundreds of years.

STAGING THE YORK & LANCASTER FAMILY TREES



During the first weeks of rehearsals, Roxana's company explored the historical relationship between the characters. *Richard III* is the last in a 'tetralogy' of plays (set of three), the first two being *Henry VI Part I* and *Henry VI Part II*. It's likely that Shakespeare's audience would be familiar with both the historical events and characters and the preceding two plays. But today's actors don't have this level of familiarity and so need to understand who everyone is in before they can stage the play.

Luke Kernaghan, the Assistant Director, worked closely with the child actors playing the children of Edward IV. Luke created a historical family tree for them to explain who's who; who's married to whom, and who killed who. Your students might find the following activity useful in helping them to understand the main characters referred to in the play.



You will need an open space for this activity, preferably a hall or drama studio.

You might want to create big clear labels for the characters, either sticky labels, or for them to hold.

- Divide your space into two. One half represents the House of Lancaster; the other the House of York. Put two sets of chairs in the centre of each half. In both halves, put one chair, representing the throne, in front and facing away from the others.
- Explain to students that you're going to build up the family trees of the two warring families. You will ask for 12 volunteers who will represent historical characters of importance to the play. Tell them that each time someone takes up their position they are to say who they are and to whom they are related or married.
- Ask for your first two volunteers: King Edward IV and King Henry VI. Ask them to sit on the 'thrones': Edward on the York side; Henry on the Lancaster side.
- Then ask for the next two volunteers to be the king's wives: Queen Elizabeth (wife of Edward); Queen Margaret (wife of Henry). Ask them to take a chair and sit immediately behind the kings.
- The next two characters are Edward's brothers: Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and George, Duke of Clarence. Ask them to take a chair and sit either side of Edward.
- Next is the Duchess of York, mother of Edward, George and Richard. Ask 'her' to take a chair and sit behind Edward IV.
- The next four characters are the children of each king: Princes Edward and Richard, and Princess Elizabeth are to sit in front of King Edward; Edward, Prince of Wales is to sit in front of Henry.
- Finally add Lady Anne - ask 'her' to take a chair and sit next to Edward, Prince of Wales, as his wife.

You now have an image of the main characters referred to in the play.

You might like to take a picture of this for future reference.

- Explain that you will now briefly look at what happens before the play starts. Ask Richard Duke of Gloucester, Henry VI and Edward Prince of Wales to stand and meet in the middle. Explain that, according to Shakespeare, Richard kills both Henry and Edward. Ask Henry and Edward to lie on the floor 'dead', while Richard returns to his position.
- Ask Queen Margaret to stand. Remove her chair and the dead Henry VI's chair from the House of Lancaster, explaining that they no longer have the throne, which now belongs to the House of York.

You are now ready for the play to begin...

You could choose to re-create this image anytime to show the end of the play, and who is still alive and who Richard murdered.

PLAYING AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF LONDON



The director and the actors talked about the setting for the play: much of the action takes place on the streets of London where we frequently see members of the royal family or court, which would never happen now. For example, Richard walks from his home to the Tower of London; Lady Anne walks behind the funeral procession of Henry VI; and three past queens bump into each other.

So this is not a play about life at court. Instead Roxana's acting company developed a strong sense of London, the city and its politics. They looked at how the people of London are just as influential to the events of the play as the nobles, since Richard enlists the support of the citizens in order to become king.

The play contains frequent references to the Tower of London which the acting company visited early in rehearsals. There was much discussion about what the Tower meant at the time when the play was set and written. We know it now as a prison, and sometimes a place of torture. However, in the 15th and 16th century, it's meaning was a lot more ambiguous since it was almost a royal household as well as a place of imprisonment.

PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, PUBLIC SPACES



The actors, director and designer gave much thought to this very public nature of the play: private conversations take place outside; there is a sense of characters always being observed; and you never know who you might bump into*.

The next activity allows students to explore this concept for themselves and observe the effect of private conversations taking place in public. You will need an open space, preferably a hall or drama studio.



- Give students copies of the extract on the next page and explain that Richard meets his brother George on the streets of London. George is being escorted to the Tower of London by Brakenbury, Lieutenant of the Tower.
- In threes, ask students to read and then act out this extract. When everyone's finished bring the whole group back together and ask for initial observations on the speech. Why is George going to the tower? What does Brakenbury do while George and Richard talk? Why does Richard say, 'We speak no treason'? What atmosphere is created by this scene? What does it tell us about the world of the play?
- Explain that you're now going to stage the extract with the help of some volunteers. Ask for three volunteers to be the named characters, and a fourth volunteer to be the guard. Ask for suggestions about where the four should stand in relation to each other. Then ask for about 10 volunteers to be the citizens of London, moving around the streets of their home city. What do they do when they see Richard and George talking? Do they walk past them? Try to overhear what is being said? Stop and watch? Agree what each of the 'citizens' will do and then ask the three speaking characters to act the extract again.
- When they've finished, ask the students playing Richard, George and Brakenbury for their reaction. How did it feel to have people walking around as they were talking? Were there any particular sections of text that they felt uncomfortable hearing or saying in public? What does this activity tell us about the play? What happens when private conversations take place in public?

* This echoes themes explored in the 2007 RSC production of the play. The education pack for this production (directed by Michael Boyd) can be found at www.rsc.org.uk/education/resources. The pack includes additional activities that you could use with your students, particularly an activity that explores the public/private nature of the play, and the idea that everything is being watched.

EDITED SCENE

ACT 1 SCENE 1

[Richard is alone onstage]

Enter CLARENCE, guarded, and BRAKENBURY

RICHARD Brother, good day. What means this armed guard
That waits upon your Grace?

CLARENCE His Majesty,
...hath appointed
This conduct to convey me to th' Tower.

RICHARD Upon what cause?

CLARENCE Because my name is George.
He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
And says a wizard told him that by G
His issue disinherited should be;
And, for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought that I am he.

RICHARD Why, this it is when men are rul'd by women:
'Tis not the King that sends you to the Tower;
My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
That tempers him to this extremity.
We are not safe, Clarence; we are not safe.

CLARENCE By heaven, I think there is no man is secure
But the Queen's kindred...

BRAKENBURY I beseech your Graces both to pardon me:
His Majesty hath straitly given in charge
That no man shall have private conference,
Of what degree soever, with your brother.

RICHARD Even so; an't please your worship, Brakenbury,
You may partake of any thing we say:
We speak no treason, man; we say the King
Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous;
How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY I do beseech your Grace to pardon me, and withal
Forbear your conference with the noble Duke.

RICHARD We are the Queen's abjects and must obey.
Brother, farewell; I will unto the King;
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and guard

SAYING YES – HOW & WHY LADY ANNE IS PERSUADED



During rehearsals the actors and director talked about how first Anne and then Queen Elizabeth 'give in' to Richard's powers of persuasion - even though they have every reason to hate him.

Roxana Silbert, the director, had recently directed *Measure for Measure* for the RSC. In rehearsals, she talked of comparisons between the character Isabella agreeing to marry the Duke with one word, 'yes', and these two instances in *Richard III* where the agreement seems equally surprising and open to interpretation. For an acting company, the focus became *why* the characters say yes, and *how*.



Jonjo O'Neill and Pippa Nixon
as Richard and Lady Anne



In this next activity students are given the chance to explore the wooing of Lady Anne. You will need a cleared space, either in a classroom or a drama studio, and the students need notepaper and pens.

- Ask students to work in pairs and read the interview below (from page 10) with Jonjo O'Neill, the actor playing Richard III, especially where he talks about the wooing of Lady Anne and how vulnerable she is. Ask them to discuss the actor's observations.
- Then ask students to choose to be either Richard or Anne. In their pairs, ask them to read out loud the edited dialogue on pages 8 and 9.
- Ask students to brainstorm (and write down) ideas about why Anne might eventually agree to marry Richard. Possibilities might include:
 - England is a dangerous place politically
 - She has lost her father, her husband and her father-in-law; Richard offers her protection
 - She is frightened of Richard
 - She is lonely; and so onDiscuss these with the whole group.
- Now ask them to brainstorm possible ways in which Anne might respond to Richard's persuasiveness. These might include:
 - As if she's terrified of him
 - As if she becomes worn down by his arguments, and so on.
- Now ask them to brainstorm possible ways to play Richard. These might include:
 - As if he's in love
 - As if he's determined
 - As if he is truly repentant, and so on.
- Ask students to write down at least four credible 'as ifs' (two for each character). Then ask them to choose the first set of 'as ifs' and read aloud the edited dialogue again, applying this interpretation to the playing of their character. When they've tried one version, ask them to try another.
- Ask students to choose the interpretation they feel is most interesting. Then ask some pairs to share their version with the rest of the group.
- Discuss: How does each interpretation change the relationship between Anne and Richard? Which interpretation(s) feel most interesting, or most plausible? Why?

EDITED SCENE

ACT 1 SCENE 2

[Lady Anne is following the funeral procession of King Henry VI, her father-in-law. Richard interrupts the process.]

ANNE What black magician conjures up this fiend,
To stop devoted charitable deeds?

RICHARD Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

ANNE Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell!
Didst thou not kill this king?

RICHARD I grant ye.

ANNE Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then, God grant me too
Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!
And thou unfit for any place but hell.

RICHARD Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

ANNE Some dungeon.

RICHARD Your bed-chamber.

ANNE Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

RICHARD So will it, madam, till I lie with you.

ANNE Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.

RICHARD Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

ANNE Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead!

RICHARD If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
Lo here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword; *Gives her his sword*
And humbly beg the death upon my knee. *Kneels*

ANNE Arise, dissembler; though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner.
I would I knew thy heart.

RICHARD 'Tis figur'd in my tongue.

ANNE I fear me both are false.

RICHARD Then never was man true.

ANNE Well put up your sword.

RICHARD Say, then, my peace is made.

ANNE That shalt thou know hereafter.

RICHARD But shall I live in hope?

ANNE All men, I hope, live so.

RICHARD Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE To take is not to give. *Puts on the ring*

ACT 1 SCENE 2 [CONTINUED]

RICHARD ... if thy poor devoted servant may
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,

ANNE What is it?

RICHARD ... presently repair to Crosby House;
Where-after I have solemnly interr'd
... this noble king,
And wet his grave with my repentant tears –
I will with all expedient duty see you.
For divers unknown reasons, I beseech you,
Grant me this boon.

ANNE With all my heart; and much it joys me too
To see you are become so penitent.

INTERVIEW WITH JONJO O'NEILL



Jonjo O'Neill plays Richard III. This interview took place during rehearsals, about two weeks before the production opened.

How do you approach the script?

First we have to work out what is being said. What are the characters saying to each other?

I look up words I don't understand, or words that we don't use anymore. What are the people trying to say? What does he or she mean?

Everyone chooses different words to communicate. I think 'What is this person trying to say? Why are they using these words?' Sometimes a character can use a thousand words to paint a picture of how they feel. Sometimes they don't speak. What characters don't say reveals just as much.

For me to come to close to an understanding of the text, I've had to read it countless times. No-one picks up this stuff and understands it straightaway. Shakespeare made up words all the time; made up stories; made new ways of writing. I had to go through the play, looking up words and characters.



Jonjo O'Neill as Richard III
in the 2012 production

What is your process for understanding what is being said?

A useful thing to do is to try to put what a character is saying into your own words. The first thing said in the play is this - it's one long sentence:

Now is the winter of our discontent
made glorious summer by this son of York,
and all the clouds that loured upon our house
in the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

So what's he saying? To me it sounds a bit like:

Now all our bad times / Are made into glorious times by this new king
and all our enemies / are nowhere to be seen

Or: Good times are here, the bad times are over!

I go through the whole play like this, working out what the characters are saying.

After that, I consider: What is the story? What is happening here?

I try to say what happens in each scene in my own words. That means asking a lot of questions. As many questions as it takes to understand. Some questions I might ask are:

Why is he here? What history do these characters have?
Do they like each other? Do they need each other?
What are they feeling? What might they be thinking?
Where are they? Is it public/private?
Are there characters present who don't speak? How does this affect the scene?

Sometimes the answers aren't easy. Sometimes the questions aren't useful!

What did you know about Richard before you started rehearsals?

I knew almost nothing about Richard before I started rehearsals! It's a history play but that doesn't mean it's a true story; it just means that some characters and events are taken from history. I knew there was a real Richard III; that he is one of Shakespeare's villains; and I was aware of a physical deformity.

What did you learn about Richard? Has anything surprised you?

Richard is really funny and really alive. He can see how everyone behaves: the way everyone is caught up in a game, in a struggle for power, but claiming their innocence.

He's a brilliant actor; he knows how to act. But he's cast as a hunchback, and can't play the game. He's angry, not prepared to accept his role in the drama. But he does become the role that he's been cast in. He has a great time - he enjoys being with the audience. It starts out as such a party with the audience - but it ends terribly.

I'm interested in how little love he has for himself, how that somehow translates into how he views others; he can't see good in anyone else.

Everything I've learned about Richard is through doing it, not reading it.

How do you play a character who seems such a villain?

I don't think Shakespeare judges Richard. I don't judge Richard. My job as an actor is to understand him. And we need villains because otherwise how do we know we're not villains?

You have to look at the way your character sees the world. What would it be like? I'm going on a journey with Richard; my journey will be different from everyone else's because it's mine.



Jonjo and the company in rehearsal for *Richard III*

Is this play about ambition?

I don't think it's about a man who wanted to be king; I don't think it's about ambition.

What's important about it, and what I'm discovering, is that Richard could be anyone. He could be any of us: the idea that we'll be happy when we get the next thing. And then you get it and just want the next thing, and then more. But you're never satisfied. That feeling runs through it; the feeling of not being happy.

How does Richard successfully woo Lady Anne? How did you tackle this scene as an actor?

Lady Anne is persuaded - so that tells us something about her. So I work backwards from that point. Why was she persuaded? She's very vulnerable as a woman: she's ended up on the losing side of the war, having lost her husband and her father-in-law who was very protective of her. Richard's a very powerful man: does she think that Richard offers some kind of security? Maybe she believes him, that he is repentant. Does she have a choice? Is Richard offering a choice or is Richard showing her that she has no or little choice?

I asked myself, 'How can Richard persuade convincingly?' I try to win her, that's my simple approach. I try to make it easy for her to say yes, I need to convince her with all my might.

What advice do you have for young people approaching Shakespeare?

It's taken me all of my acting life to make Shakespeare's language feel natural. Initially it doesn't feel natural to be speaking Shakespeare; to be speaking a love scene in Shakespeare - it felt embarrassing! But you have to say it like you mean it. If the other person on stage doesn't believe it then how will the audience?

Shakespeare responds very well to commitment, to saying things like you mean them. When we 'half mean' Shakespeare, it feels embarrassing when we're saying it and everyone can see our 'half meaning'.

What I love about doing Shakespeare is when you can play one of these characters and say their words and mean them and not be embarrassed; not be frightened by what people think of you.



More teaching activities to support your active approaches to Shakespeare can be found in our book, *RSC Shakespeare Toolkit for Teachers*, which is available to buy at the [RSC Shop](#).

We also run a range of courses for teachers and students - for more information about these visit: www.rsc.org.uk/education

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