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 William Shakespeare  
 Excerpt  
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## KING RICHARD II

[I. I.] *A great scaffold within the castle at Windsor, with seats thereon, and a space of ground before it*

*'Enter KING RICHARD, JOHN OF GAUNT, with the DUKE OF SURREY, other nobles and attendants.' They ascend the scaffold and sit in their places, the King in a chair of justice in the midst*

*K. Richard.* Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,  
 Hast thou according to thy oath and band  
 Brought hither Henry Hereford thy bold son,  
 Here to make good the boist'rous late appeal,  
 Which then our leisure would not let us hear,  
 Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?

*Gaunt.* I have, my liege.

*K. Richard.* Tell me, moreover, hast thou sounded him,  
 If he appeal the duke on ancient malice,  
 Or worthily as a good subject should

10

On some known ground of treachery in him?  
*Gaunt.* As near as I could sift him on that argument,  
 On some apparent danger seen in him  
 Aimed at your highness, no inveterate malice.

*K. Richard.* Then call them to our presence—face to face,  
 And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear  
 The accuser and the accused freely speak:  
 High-stomached are they both and full of ire,  
 In rage, deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.

*'Enter BOLINGBROKE and MOWBRAY'*

- 20 *Bolingbroke.* Many years of happy days befall  
 My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege!  
*Mowbray.* Each day still better other's happiness,  
 Until the heavens, envying earth's good hap,  
 Add an immortal title to your crown!  
*K. Richard.* We thank you both, yet one but  
 flatters us,  
 As well appeareth by the cause you come,  
 Namely, to appeal each other of high treason:  
 Cousin of Hereford, what dost thou object  
 Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?
- 30 *Bolingbroke.* First—heaven be the record to  
 my speech  
 In the devotion of a subject's love,  
 Tend'ring the precious safety of my prince,  
 And free from other misbegotten hate,  
 Come I appellant to this princely presence....  
 Now Thomas Mowbray do I turn to thee,  
 And mark my greeting well: for what I speak  
 My body shall make good upon this earth,  
 Or my divine soul answer it in heaven:  
 Thou art a traitor and a miscreant,
- 40 Too good to be so, and too bad to live,  
 Since the more fair and crystal is the sky,  
 The uglier seem the clouds that in it fly:  
 Once more, the more to aggravate the note,  
 With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat,  
 And wish (so please my sovereign) ere I move,  
 What my tongue speaks my right drawn sword  
 may prove.  
*Mowbray.* Let not my cold words here accuse my zeal.  
 \*Tis not the trial of a woman's war,

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 Excerpt  
[More information](#)

I. I. 49                    KING RICHARD II                    5

The bitter clamour of two eager tongues,  
 Can arbitrate this cause betwixt us twain.                    50  
 The blood is hot that must be cooled for this.  
 Yet can I not of such tame patience boast  
 As to be hushed and nought at all to say....  
 First the fair reverence of your highness curbs me  
 From giving reins and spurs to my free speech,  
 Which else would post until it had returned  
 These terms of treason doubled down his throat:  
 Setting aside his high blood's royalty,  
 And let him be no kinsman to my liege,  
 I do defy him, and I spit at him,                    60  
 Call him a slanderous coward, and a villain,  
 Which to maintain I would allow him odds,  
 And meet him were I tied to run afoot,  
 Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,  
 Or any other ground inhabitable,  
 Where ever Englishman durst set his foot.  
 Mean time, let this defend my loyalty—  
 By all my hopes most falsely doth he lie.  
*Bolingbroke.* Pale trembling coward there I throw  
                   my gage,                    [*he casts it at Mowbray's feet*  
 Disclaiming here the kindred of the king,                    70  
 And lay aside my high blood's royalty,  
 Which fear, not reverence, makes thee to except....  
 If guilty dread have left thee so much strength,  
 As to take up mine honour's pawn, then stoop.  
 By that, and all the rites of knighthood else,  
 Will I make good against thee, arm to arm,  
 What I have spoke, or thou canst worse devise.  
*Mowbray.* I take it up, and by that sword I swear,  
 Which gently laid my knighthood on my shoulder,  
 I'll answer thee in any fair degree,                    80  
 Or chivalrous design of knightly trial:

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 Excerpt  
[More information](#)

6

## KING RICHARD II

1.1.82

And when I mount, alive may I not light,  
 If I be traitor or unjustly fight!

*K. Richard.* What doth our cousin lay to  
 Mowbray's charge?

It must be great that can inherit us  
 So much as of a thought of ill in him.

*Bolingbroke.* Look what I speak, my life shall prove  
 it true,

That Mowbray hath received eight thousand nobles  
 In name of 'lendings' for your highness' soldiers,

90 The which he hath detained for lewd employments,  
 Like a false traitor, and injurious villain:

Besides I say, and will in battle prove,  
 Or here, or elsewhere to the furthest verge

That ever was surveyed by English eye,  
 That all the treasons for these eighteen years,

Complotted and contrived in this land...

Fetch from false Mowbray their first head and spring!

Further I say, and further will maintain

Upon his bad life to make all this good,

100 That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death,

Suggest his soon-believing adversaries,

And consequently like a traitor coward,

Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood,

Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,

Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,

To me for justice and rough chastisement:

And by the glorious worth of my descent,

This arm shall do it, or this life be spent.

*K. Richard.* How high a pitch his resolution soars!

110 Thomas of Norfolk, what say'st thou to this?

*Mowbray.* O, let my sovereign turn away his face,

And bid his ears a little while be deaf,

Till I have told this slander of his blood,

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William Shakespeare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

I. I. 114

## KING RICHARD II

7

How God and good men hate so foul a liar.

*K. Richard.* Mowbray, impartial are our eyes  
and ears,

Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir,  
As he is but my father's brother's son,  
Now by my sceptre's awe I make a vow,  
Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood  
Should nothing privilege him nor partialize  
The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.  
He is our subject, Mowbray, so art thou,  
Free speech and fearless I to thee allow.

120

*Mowbray.* Then Bolingbroke as low as to thy heart  
Through the false passage of thy throat thou liest!  
Three parts of that receipt I had for Calais  
Disbursed I duly to his highness' soldiers,  
The other part reserved I by consent,  
For that my sovereign liege was in my debt,  
Upon remainder of a dear account,  
Since last I went to France to fetch his queen:  
Now swallow down that lie....For Gloucester's death,  
I slew him not, but to my own disgrace  
Neglected my sworn duty in that case:  
For you, my noble lord of Lancaster,  
The honourable father to my foe,  
Once did I lay an ambush for your life,  
A trespass that doth vex my grievéd soul:  
But ere I last received the sacrament,  
I did confess it, and exactly begged  
Your grace's pardon, and I hope I had it....  
This is my fault—as for the rest appealed  
It issues from the rancour of a villain,  
A recreant and most degenerate traitor,  
Which in myself I boldly will defend,  
And interchangeably hurl down my gage

130

140

W.R. II-6

- Upon this overweening traitor's foot,  
 To prove myself a loyal gentleman,  
 Even in the best blood chambered in his bosom,  
 150 In haste whereof most heartily I pray  
 Your highness to assign our trial day.  
*K. Richard.* Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled  
 by me,  
 Let's purge this choler without letting blood.  
 This we prescribe, though no physician—  
 Deep malice makes too deep incision—  
 Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed.  
 Our doctors say this is no month to bleed...  
 Good uncle, let this end where it begun,  
 We'll calm the Duke of Norfolk, you your son.  
 160 *Gaunt.* To be a make-peace shall become my age,  
 Throw down, my son, the Duke of Norfolk's gage.  
*K. Richard.* And, Norfolk, throw down his.  
*Gaunt.* When, Harry? when?  
 Obedience bids I should not bid again.  
*K. Richard.* Norfolk, throw down we bid, there is  
 no boot.  
*Mowbray.* Myself I throw, dread sovereign, at thy foot,  
 My life thou shalt command, but not my shame,  
 The one my duty owes, but my fair name,  
 Despite of death that lives upon my grave,  
 To dark dishonour's use thou shalt not have:  
 170 I am disgraced, impeached, and baffled here,  
 Pierced to the soul with slander's venom'd spear,  
 The which no balm can cure but his heart-blood  
 Which breathed this poison.  
*K. Richard.* Rage must be withstood.  
 Give me his gage; lions make leopards tame.  
*Mowbray.* Yea, but not change his spots: take but  
 my shame,

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[More information](#)

I. I. 176

KING RICHARD II

9

And I resign my gage. My dear dear lord,  
 The purest treasure mortal times afford,  
 Is spotless reputation—that away  
 Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.  
 A jewel in a ten-times-barred-up chest 180  
 Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast:  
 Mine honour is my life, both grow in one,  
 Take honour from me, and my life is done:  
 Then, dear my liege, mine honour let me try—  
 In that I live, and for that will I die.

*K. Richard.* Cousin, throw up your gage, do  
 you begin.

*Bolingbroke.* O God defend my soul from such  
 deep sin!

Shall I seem crest-fallen in my father's sight?  
 Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height  
 Before this out-dared dastard? ere my tongue 190  
 Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong,  
 Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear  
 The slavish motive of recanting fear,  
 And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace,  
 Where shame doth harbour, even in Mowbray's  
 face.

*K. Richard.* We were not born to sue, but  
 to command,

Which since we cannot do, to make you friends,  
 Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,  
 At Coventry upon Saint Lambert's day.  
 There shall your swords and lances arbitrate 200  
 The swelling difference of your settled hate.  
 Since we can not atone you, we shall see  
 Justice design the victor's chivalry.  
 Lord marshal, command our officers at arms  
 Be ready to direct these home alarms. [they go

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 Excerpt  
[More information](#)

10

## KING RICHARD II

1.2.1

[1. 2.] *A room in the Duke of Lancaster's house*

*'Enter JOHN OF GAUNT with the DUCHESS  
 OF GLOUCESTER'*

*Gaunt.* Alas, the part I had in Woodstock's blood  
 Doth more solicit me than your exclaims  
 To stir against the butchers of his life,  
 But since correction lieth in those hands,  
 Which made the fault that we cannot correct...  
 Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven,  
 Who, when they see the hours ripe on earth,  
 Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.

*Duchess.* Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?  
 10 Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?  
 Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,  
 Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,  
 Or seven fair branches springing from one root:  
 Some of those seven are dried by nature's course,  
 Some of those branches by the Destinies cut:  
 But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,  
 One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,  
 One flourishing branch of his most royal root,  
 Is cracked, and all the precious liquor spilt,  
 20 Is hacked down, and his summer leaves all faded,  
 By envy's hand, and murder's bloody axe....

[*she weeps*]

Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine! that bed,  
 that womb,  
 That mettle, that self mould, that fashioned thee  
 Made him a man; and though thou livest  
 and breathest,  
 Yet art thou slain in him. Thou dost consent  
 In some large measure to thy father's death,



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[More information](#)

1.2.27 KING RICHARD II 11

In that thou seest thy wretched brother die,  
 Who was the model of thy father's life...  
 Call it not patience, Gaunt, it is despair.  
 In suff'ring thus thy brother to be slaught'ed, 30  
 Thou showest the naked pathway to thy life,  
 Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee:  
 That which in mean men we intitle patience,  
 Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts....

What shall I say? to safeguard thine own life,  
 The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death.  
*Gaunt.* God's is the quarrel—for God's substitute,  
 His deputy anointed in His sight,  
 Hath caused his death, the which if wrongfully,  
 Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift 40  
 An angry arm against His minister.

*Duchess.* Where then, alas, may I complain myself?

*Gaunt.* To God, the widow's champion and defence.

*Duchess.* Why then, I will...Farewell, old Gaunt.  
 Thou goest to Coventry, there to behold  
 Our cousin Hereford and fell Mowbray fight.  
 O, sit my husband's wrongs on Hereford's spear,  
 That it may enter butcher Mowbray's breast!  
 Or if misfortune miss the first career,  
 Be Mowbray's sins so heavy in his bosom, 50  
 That they may break his foaming courser's back,  
 And throw the rider headlong in the lists,  
 A caitiff recreant to my cousin Hereford!  
 Farewell old Gaunt, thy sometimes brother's wife  
 With her companion Grief must end her life.

*Gaunt.* Sister farewell, I must to Coventry,  
 As much good stay with thee, as go with me!

*Duchess.* Yet one word more—Grief boundeth where  
 it falls,  
 Not with the empty hollowness, but weight:

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 Excerpt  
[More information](#)

12

## KING RICHARD II

1.2.60

- 60 I take my leave before I have begun,  
 For sorrow ends not when it seemeth done:  
 Commend me to thy brother, Edmund York.  
 Lo, this is all...nay, yet depart not so,  
 Though this be all, do not so quickly go...  
 I shall remember more...Bid him—ah, what?—  
 With all good speed at Plashy visit me.  
 Alack and what shall good old York there see  
 But empty lodgings and unfurnished walls,  
 Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?  
 70 And what hear there for welcome but my groans?  
 Therefore commend me, let him not come there,  
 To seek out sorrow that dwells every where.  
 Desolate, desolate, will I hence and die:  
 The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye. [*they go*]

[1. 3.] *The lists at Coventry; to the side a platform, with a throne (richly hanged and adorned) for the king, and seats for his court; at either end of the lists chairs for the combatants; a great throng of spectators. Heralds, &c. attending*

*'Enter the Lord Marshal and the DUKE AUMERLE'*

*Marshal.* My Lord Aumerle, is Harry Hereford armed?

*Aumerle.* Yea, at all points, and longs to enter in.

*Marshal.* The Duke of Norfolk, sprightly and bold,

Stays but the summons of the appellant's trumpet.

*Aumerle.* Why then, the champions are prepared and stay

For nothing but his majesty's approach.