

Edited by Pat Baldwin, Tom Baldwin

Excerpt
[More Information](#) Richard resolves to be evil. He tells the audience that he has arranged for King Edward to see his brother Clarence as a threat and imprison him in the Tower. He jokes about Clarence's plight.

Stagecraft

Richard's soliloquy (in fours)

Richard's opening soliloquy falls into three main parts:

- **Lines 1–13** His comments about the change from war to peace and the character of the new monarch, Edward ('this son of York').
- **Lines 14–27** How Richard feels about the way he looks.
- **Lines 28–41** How he plans to gain power.

A major decision for any director of the play is how to stage this important speech. The conventional way of playing a soliloquy is for the actor to speak directly to the audience, as if inviting them to share his innermost thoughts. In the 1996 movie version starring Ian McKellen, however, Richard speaks the first ten lines as if making a public speech at a state banquet. The rest of the soliloquy is delivered in private in the men's toilet. What ideas do *you* have for staging this speech?

- One member of your group takes the role of director; the other members each choose one of the three sections listed above and read the lines aloud one after the other. Think about how you might create contrasts between voice, gesture and body language as you swap over from section to section.
- What particular words or images give you clues about how you might play the part? Compile a list in your groups.

1 Dramatic irony (in threes)

Richard has just told the audience how he is plotting to destroy his brother George, the Duke of Clarence, so almost all of what Richard says to Clarence's face is filled with **dramatic irony** (when the audience knows more than a character on stage, see p. 251). Richard pretends to be innocent, but he already knows the answers to the questions he asks.

- Two members of the group take the parts of Richard and Clarence and read through the script opposite from line 43. The third person voices Richard's hidden thoughts at appropriate points. For example, when Richard says, 'Brother, good day', does he mean this? What is he really thinking? Practise reading the script in this way up to line 61, then share your presentation with the rest of the class.

entertain spend, enjoy

determined decided, resolved

inductions preparations

libels lies about people

subtle crafty

mewed up imprisoned, caged like a hawk

About a prophecy by means of a prophecy

Dive descend

guarded surrounded by guards

Tend'ring caring for

conduct guard

the Tower the Tower of London (both a royal residence and a state prison)

belike maybe

cross-row alphabet

issue offspring, children

toys fancies

commit imprison

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)KING RICHARD III ACT I SCENE I 

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 I am determinèd to prove a villain 30
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
 Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams
 To set my brother Clarence and the king
 In deadly hate the one against the other. 35
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
 About a prophecy which says that 'G'
 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be. 40
 Dive, thoughts, down to my soul, here Clarence comes.

Enter CLARENCE and BRAKENBURY, guarded

Brother, good day. What means this armèd guard
 That waits upon your grace?

CLARENCE His majesty,
 Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
 This conduct to convey me to the Tower. 45

RICHARD Upon what cause?

CLARENCE Because my name is George.

RICHARD Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
 He should for that commit your godfathers.
 Oh, belike his majesty hath some intent
 That you should be new christened in the Tower. 50
 But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

CLARENCE Yea, Richard, when I know, but I protest
 As yet I do not. But as I can learn,
 He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
 And from the cross-row plucks the letter 'G', 55
 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.
 These, as I learn, and suchlike toys as these 60
 Hath moved his highness to commit me now.

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Excerpt
[More Information](#) Richard claims that Queen Elizabeth has caused King Edward to imprison Clarence, and that she and Jane Shore have become powers behind the throne. Brakenbury's unease is dismissed with innuendo and sexual puns.

Themes

Richard's attitude to women

Richard comments that 'men are ruled by women' (line 62). He blames Queen Elizabeth and Clarence blames King Edward's mistress, Jane Shore, for having Clarence sent to the Tower. In line 64, Richard sneeringly refers to Queen Elizabeth as 'My lady Grey' because before her marriage to Edward in 1464 she was the widow of Sir Thomas Grey. Elizabeth used her position as Queen to gain power and influence for her large family, the Woodvilles, and in so doing aroused much jealousy. In the course of the play, Richard frequently refers to both Jane Shore and Elizabeth as sources of trouble, as if they pose a threat to him in his pursuit of power.

- Look through the script opposite and make a list of all the words Richard uses that are insulting to women. As you work through the play, keep in mind Richard's attitude to women and consider the true extent of women's power and influence in this society.

1 Making Brakenbury feel inferior? (in threes)

Brakenbury (the courtier who is taking Clarence to the Tower) addresses Richard and Clarence as 'your graces' (line 84) because they are royal dukes, but Richard calls him 'man' (line 90) and makes jokes at Brakenbury's expense. How might you show their different status on stage?

- Number each group member 1 to 3, where 1 is someone of very high status, 2 is someone of middle status and 3 is someone of low status. Experiment with how these people relate to one another:
 - How do you look at one another?
 - How do you say hello to one another?
 - How do you sit down, walk around and so on?
- Take Richard's line 90 ('We speak no treason, man') and freeze the action in role as Richard, Clarence and Brakenbury. Show your tableau to the rest of the class. Can they guess who is who, using clues from positioning, body language and facial expressions?
- Compile a list of reasons why Richard might enjoy trying to make Brakenbury feel inferior. Do you think he succeeds?

worship honour

kindred family

night-walking heralds
secret messengers

trudge trail back and forth

suppliant beggar of favours

delivery Hastings's release from prison

her deity her god (King Edward or Jane Shore's evil spirits)

Lord Chamberlain Hastings

livery uniform

o'er-worn worn out, second-hand

widow Queen Elizabeth, whose first husband died

dubbed created

straitly given in charge
strictly ordered

conference conversation

Of what degree soever
no matter what their social status

Well struck advanced

cherry lip red lips (a sign of beauty)

bonny pretty

passing pleasing tongue
exceptionally well spoken

nought nothing

Naught naughtiness (with sexual overtones)

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

KING RICHARD III ACT I SCENE I



- RICHARD Why, this it is when men are ruled by women.
 'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower.
 My lady Grey, his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
 That tempts him to this harsh extremity. 65
 Was it not she and that good man of worship,
 Anthony Woodville, her brother there,
 That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
 From whence this present day he is delivered?
 We are not safe, Clarence, we are not safe. 70
- CLARENCE By heaven, I think there is no man secure
 But the queen's kindred and night-walking heralds
 That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore.
 Heard you not what an humble suppliant
 Lord Hastings was for her delivery? 75
- RICHARD Humbly complaining to her deity
 Got my Lord Chamberlain his liberty.
 I'll tell you what, I think it is our way,
 If we will keep in favour with the king,
 To be her men and wear her livery. 80
 The jealous, o'er-worn widow and herself,
 Since that our brother dubbed them gentlewomen,
 Are mighty gossips in our monarchy.
- BRAKENBURY I beseech your graces both to pardon me;
 His majesty hath straitly given in charge 85
 That no man shall have private conference,
 Of what degree soever, with your brother.
- RICHARD Even so. And please your worship, Brakenbury,
 You may partake of any thing we say.
 We speak no treason, man. We say the king 90
 Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
 Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous.
 We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
 A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue,
 And that the queen's kindred are made gentlefolks. 95
 How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?
- BRAKENBURY With this, my lord, myself have nought to do.
- RICHARD Naught to do with Mistress Shore? I tell thee, fellow,
 He that doth naught with her (excepting one)
 Were best to do it secretly alone. 100

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Excerpt Richard promises to do any service he can to ensure Clarence's release. Alone on stage, Richard reveals that he really seeks Clarence's death. Hastings swears vengeance on those who caused his imprisonment.

[More Information](#)

1 Saying one thing but meaning another (in pairs)

A major feature of Richard's language is that his words frequently have double meanings. Listeners hear one thing, but he means something else. Most of what he says to Clarence has a meaning that Clarence does not perceive. For example, when Richard says 'Brother; farewell', Clarence probably hears a friendly voice, but Richard may mean 'Goodbye for ever because you'll soon be dead'.

- As one person slowly speaks lines 107–116, pausing frequently, the other person says in each pause what Richard probably means.

Characters

Who's who? (in pairs)

- Draw up a list of who's who in the play so far and show their relationships to one another. Use the list of characters on pages 4–5 and devise symbols, or a colour code, to show status and relationships between the people who have appeared so far in the scene.
- Where would you fit Lord Hastings? Hastings is a faithful supporter of the House of York, but he is much opposed to Queen Elizabeth and the rest of the Woodville family. Hastings' influence weakened during the illness of his patron King Edward, and that loss of power may have led to his imprisonment. Hastings was Jane Shore's lover, however, and she may have used her influence with the King to secure his early release from prison.

Language in the play

Birds of prey (by yourself)

Throughout the play, the imagery of birds and animals is often used to describe Richard.

- Who is Hastings referring to when he talks of 'the eagles' (line 133) and 'kites and buzzards' (line 134)?
- Write a paragraph describing Shakespeare's use of animal imagery in this part of the play and its effect on characterisation and atmosphere. Remember to refer to the script in detail and to use embedded quotations.

withal also**Forbear** stop**abjects** despised outcasts or servants (Richard's joking pun on 'subjects')**widow** (Queen Elizabeth – Richard again mocks her)**enfranchise** free (from prison or from life)**perforce** without choice ('Patience perforce' was a common proverb for a condition that had no remedy)**new-delivered** recently released from prison**brooked** endured**to give them thanks** to be revenged on them**cause of my imprisonment** (Hastings refers to the Woodville clan)

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

KING RICHARD III ACT I SCENE I



BRAKENBURY	What one, my lord?	
RICHARD	Her husband, knave. Wouldst thou betray me?	
BRAKENBURY	I do beseech your grace to pardon me, and withal Forbear your conference with the noble duke.	
CLARENCE	We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.	105
RICHARD	We are the queen's objects and must obey. Brother, farewell. I will unto the king, And whatsoever you will employ me in, Were it to call King Edward's widow 'sister', I will perform it to enfranchise you.	110
CLARENCE	Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood Touches me deeper than you can imagine. I know it pleaseth neither of us well.	
RICHARD	Well, your imprisonment shall not be long. I will deliver you or else lie for you. Meantime, have patience.	115
CLARENCE	I must perforce. Farewell.	
	<i>Exeunt Clarence[, Brakenbury, and guards]</i>	
RICHARD	Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return. Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven, If heaven will take the present at our hands. But who comes here? The new-delivered Hastings?	120
	<i>Enter LORD HASTINGS</i>	
HASTINGS	Good time of day unto my gracious lord.	
RICHARD	As much unto my good Lord Chamberlain. Well are you welcome to this open air. How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?	125
HASTINGS	With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must. But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks That were the cause of my imprisonment.	
RICHARD	No doubt, no doubt, and so shall Clarence too, For they that were your enemies are his And have prevailed as much on him as you.	130
HASTINGS	More pity that the eagles should be mewed While kites and buzzards play at liberty.	
RICHARD	What news abroad?	135

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Excerpt Hastings says Edward is near to death. Richard blames the King's lifestyle. Alone on stage, Richard hopes that Edward will not die until Clarence has been executed. He reveals his plan to marry Anne.

[More Information](#)

1 What is King Edward like?

On every page of the play so far, there have been clues to King Edward's character. 'Oh, he hath kept an evil diet long' (line 140) suggests that for a long time Edward has lived wildly.

- Look back at what Richard, Clarence and Hastings have said about Edward so far in Scene 1. Compile a list of between six and ten words that sum up your impression of the King.

Characters

Richard's revelations (in pairs)

The soliloquy that ends this scene (lines 146–63) offers many opportunities to explore Richard's wicked revelations through a range of dramatic choices regarding changes in voice inflection, emphasis, tone, pitch, pause and gesture.

- Sometimes actors play the lines with a lot of humour. In line 153, 'bustle' (be busy) often gains a laugh as it catches the obvious rogueishness of Richard's character. Take turns to speak the lines with actions that might be used to provoke laughter.
- Sometimes actors play the lines with a sense of outrageous evil. Lines 149–58, in particular, provoke a response in audiences. Take turns to speak the lines in a way that will most shock the audience.
- In role as an actor, write notes about how you intend to speak this soliloquy and what aspects of Richard's character you want to portray at each line or two.

fear him fear for his life

by Saint John (Richard swears an oath)

diet way of life

packed with post-horse sent as quickly as possible

steeled strengthened

deep profoundly crafty, subtle

bustle be active

Warwick's youngest daughter
Anne Neville

her father her father-in-law
(Henry VI in the play)

wench girl

secret close intent
hidden purpose

I run ... market I am getting too far ahead of myself



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Excerpt

[More Information](#)KING RICHARD III ACT I SCENE I 

HASTINGS	No news so bad abroad as this at home: The king is sickly, weak, and melancholy, And his physicians fear him mightily.	
RICHARD	Now by Saint John, that news is bad indeed. Oh, he hath kept an evil diet long And over-much consumed his royal person. 'Tis very grievous to be thought upon. Where is he, in his bed?	140
HASTINGS	He is.	
RICHARD	Go you before, and I will follow you.	145
	<i>Exit Hastings</i>	
	He cannot live, I hope, and must not die Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven. I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence With lies well steeled with weighty arguments, And if I fail not in my deep intent,	150
	Clarence hath not another day to live: Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy And leave the world for me to bustle in! For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter. What though I killed her husband and her father?	155
	The readiest way to make the wench amends Is to become her husband and her father, The which will I, not all so much for love As for another secret close intent By marrying her which I must reach unto.	160
	But yet I run before my horse to market. Clarence still breathes, Edward still lives and reigns; When they are gone, then must I count my gains.	<i>Exit</i>

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Excerpt

[More Information](#)

Lady Anne mourns over the corpse of Henry VI. She curses Richard for killing Henry and her husband, Prince Edward, Henry's son.

Stagecraft

'The corpse of KING HENRY VI is carried in'

The dead body of the former King is on stage throughout Scene 2 as a dramatic reminder of Anne's grief and loss. Imagine you are the stage designer. How do you deal with the body on stage? Compile notes and/or sketches in your Director's Journal.

Remember that the body:

- is royal (but this is not a state funeral)
- is of the Lancastrian dynasty
- has been on view for some time as Anne grieves over it
- has to be transported across the stage.

Language in the play

Anne's grief and anger (in pairs)

- a** Together, read Anne's speech and pick out one key word or short phrase per line. Keeping these key words or phrases in their original order, devise a dramatic presentation of your shortened script. Experiment with different drama strategies, such as tone of voice, choral speech, mime, movement or tableaux. Remember, you cannot add any other words. Share your performances with the rest of the class. Which one is the most effective and why?
- b** As an extension to this activity, you could choose some background music that you feel captures the mood and tone of the speech. Be prepared to explain why you think it is suitable.

Write about it

Curses

During the course of the play, several prophecies and curses are made – some of which come true in bitterly ironic ways. In lines 14–28, Anne utters a series of vengeful curses against the man who murdered her husband and his father.

- Write two paragraphs summarising Anne's curses and commenting on the language she uses. For example, think about the kinds of creatures she refers to and which words she repeats in the course of her speech.

HALBERDS soldiers carrying battle-axes

hearse bier or coffin

obsequiously as a mourner

Th'untimely the premature

key-cold very cold (i.e. as cold as a metal key)

figure form, shape

blood family

Be it let it be

invoke pray to

the selfsame the very same

windows wounds

helpless balm tears (bodies would traditionally be embalmed prior to burial)

holes wounds

More direful hap betide

a more dreadful fate fall upon

abortive premature

Prodigious abnormal

thee (line 28) Henry VI

Chertsey a town south-west of London, where there is a monastery

Paul's St Paul's cathedral (the former King is not afforded a state funeral)

interrèd buried