**Richard II Workshop**

**An introduction to the play / storytelling**

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**Introduction**

**THINGS KINGS HAVE DONE**

**The following is a list of things kings have done, in history and in Shakespeare plays.**

**Which is worst? Put them in order.**

* **Declaring war for no reason**
* **Arguing with your wife**
* **Drowning your brother in a barrel of wine**
* **Killing your brother’s young sons**
* **Having your subjects crushed to death**
* **Having your wife’s head chopped off**
* **Raising taxes for your people**
* **Spending too much money on yourself and your court**
* **Ignoring the poor**
* **Imprisoning your relatives for no reason**
* **Ordering the murder of your stepson**

**Which of these actions could you imagine modern leaders doing in the modern world?**

**Can you think of actions that modern leaders have done which would be high up on your list?**

**On Your Feet:**

**Groups create freezes with titles *without talking***

**-A king and his court**

**- A good king and his court**

**- traitors plotting**

**- betrayal**

**- murder**

**How did the king get chosen in your pictures?**

**What was the difference between the freeze frames?**

* **In Medieval times people believed in Divine Right**

**This is the belief that kings were given the right to rule directly from God.**

**They didn’t have to answer to anyone except God.**

**It meant that some kings abused their power.**

**It also meant that rebellion was the worst of political crimes.**

* **In 1377 Richard is crowned King of England and Wales.**
* **He is only ten years old.**
* **Because he is so young the kingdom is ruled, at first, by his uncles:**
* **John of Gaunt**
* **Duke of York**
* **Duke of Gloucester**
* **As he grew older, Richard became angry at his lack of power and argued with his uncles.**
* **He took more power but did not spend the country’s money wisely.**
* **The Duke of Gloucester tried to limit his powers.**
* **When the play begins, somebody has just murdered the Duke of Gloucester.**
* **Who is responsible?**

**Look at the clues below to help you make your decision.**

**Clues List**

JOHN OF GAUNT (To Richard): thou respect’st not spilling Edward’s blood

BOLINGBROKE: What dost thou know of noble Gloucester’s death, who wrought it with the king

BAGOT: Then set before my face the Lord Aumerle

FITZWATERS: I heard the banished (Mowbray) say that thou, Aumerle, didst send two of thy men to execute the noble duke at Calais

JOHN OF GAUNT: God’s substitute, His deputy anointed in his sight, hath caused (Gloucester’s) death

BOLINGBROKE: Mowbray...did plot the Duke of Gloucester’s death

MOWBRAY: For Gloucester’s death, I slew him not; but...neglected my sworn duty

**Who killed the Duke of Gloucester?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Suspect Name** | **Reasons to Suspect them** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Telling the story:**

**Allocate scenes to students and practise for performance.**

**Richard II.**

**A story of power and plotting**

1. **The Duke of Gloucester is dead. A lavish funeral takes place.**

In the presence of **King Richard**, **Henry Bolingbroke** accuses **Thomas Mowbray** (Duke of Norfolk) of stealing crown funds and of plotting the death of his uncle, the **Duke of Gloucester.**

Bilingbroke: Mowbray...thou art a traitor.

Mowbray: I do defy him and I spit at him

Call him a slanderous coward and a villain.

King Richard decides they should fight a duel to the death to decide who is telling the truth.

Richard: Be ready, as your lives shall answer it.

**Q What would you want the audience to think about Richard’s character from this moment?**

1. 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!)

Duchess: ... cold cowardice! 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.

**Q Why is John of Gaunt afraid to confront the king?**

1. **Mowbray** and **Bolingbroke** prepare to fight each other for honour, but at the last minute **Richard** stops them and decides instead to banish them both from England.

Richard: We banish you our territories.

Bolingbroke: Your will be done.

Mowbray: A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege.

Bolingbroke is exiled for ten years (later reduced to six); Mowbray is exiled for life.

**Q Why would Richard not want the fight to take place?**

1. **John of Gaunt** is dying. **Richard** is happy about this as he can take his lands and money for himself.

Richard: Now put it, God, in the physician’s mind

To help him to his grave immediately!

**John of Gaunt** begs **Richard** to let his son Bolingbroke return home. Richard refuses and Gaunt accuses him of being unfit to be king.

Gaunt: Landlord of England art thou now – not king

Richard: A lunatic lean-witted fool!

**Q How would you maintain the audience’s sympathy for Richard after this scene?**

1. **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.

York: Gentlemen, go muster up your men.

Green: Well, I will for refuge straight to Bristol Castle.

Bagot: I will to Ireland.

Bushy: As York thrives to beat back Bolingbroke...

**Q How would you develop tension in this moment?**

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

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.

**Q Why is York so easily persuaded to join Bolingbroke?**

1. **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.

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 –

**Q How would you use proxemics in this scene to show the emotions and status of each character?**

1. **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.

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

**Q How would you use acting skills to demonstrate Aumerle’s inner thoughts at this moment?**

1. 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.

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 my own tongue deny my sacred state,

With mine own breath release all duteous oaths

**Q How would you direct the actor playing Richard at this key dramatic moment?**

1. **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.

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.

**Q Why is Bolingbroke showing compassion at this moment?**

1. 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.

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*

**Q How would you avoid ‘over-acting’ the death of Richard?**

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

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.

**Q Why is Bolingbroke so angry that Richard has been killed and how do you convey this to the audience?**