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Relevance to Syllabuses

HSC English (Advanced)

*Transformations Module A: Comparative Study of Texts and Context- Elective 1, exploring connections*

This module requires students to compare texts in order to explore them in relation to their contexts. It develops students’ understanding of the effects of context and questions of value.

Students examine ways in which social, cultural and historical context influences aspects of texts, or the ways in which changes in context lead to changed values being reflected in texts. This includes study and use of the language of texts, consideration of purposes and audiences, and analysis of the content, values and attitudes conveyed through a range of readings.

Students develop a range of imaginative, interpretive and analytical compositions that relate to the comparative study of texts and context.¹

**Elective 1: Exploring Connections**

In this elective, students will explore how meanings of a pair of texts can be shaped and reshaped by considering the nature of the connections between them. Exploration of the connections between the texts will enhance understanding of the values and contexts of each text. Relationships between these texts may be implicit or explicit. Connections may be established through direct or indirect references, contexts, values, ideas, and the use of language forms and features.²

**A comparison of Shakespearean Drama and Film**


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The Director’s Vision

Follow adaptor and director Mark Kilmurry’s, online blog for an excellent insight into the process of developing this interpretation of Shakespeare’s play Richard III: Backstage Confessions.

The following interview contains further insight.

1. What was your original vision for the piece? Has it evolved in any way?

My original vision was of a solitary man, deformed, alone, sitting in a field whilst a battle commenced around him. From this spark of an idea I backtracked to the start of the play, carrying along this idea of guilt, defeat and loneliness. Richard is the runt of the pack and so therefore has to fight to make his mark. I wanted the play’s pace to increase from his joy at winning [the crown] with wicked asides to the audience, to suddenly being alone and defeated.

The characterisation of Richard is very interesting. There is a manic energy and ruthlessness with an undercurrent of fear. From here I had an idea of Richard as an actor, playing his role, which he does very well. There is that juxtaposition of true self and imagined/perceived self. From that first idea I then considered, what if a group of people gathered to perform Richard the Third set in a modern setting but with homage to the past? And I went from there....

2. Did you have any specific ideas about the play’s development before you began?

The play develops through reading and reading and reading again. The first spark was the solitary image of a despot.

3. How is your King Richard different from anyone else’s?

Because I will be playing it and directing it. A play will change from director to director because each person brings his or her own take on the world.

4. The opening of King Richard III begins as Richard expresses the anger he has at his misshapen form and the anger he feels at society for rejecting him. How important do you feel the opening monologue is in setting the tone for the play?

Incredibly important. Well, the whole play is there. The reason he does what he does, the lust for power because of the lack of lust in passion and in living a good life has been thwarted by his deformity. The language of the opening monologue is very powerful-full of puns, imagery and hate. Richard offers us the pretext for his villainy by pointing out his physical deformity and tries to argue that he is not a man made for peace. There is no valid convincing here. He will cheerfully throw aside everything humanity cherishes in order to get what he wants and yet....he charms us.

5. What aspects of Richard’s character did you feel were most important in that first revelation?
Richard’s humour and wicked sense of villainy. Richard has an ironic and satirical view of the world, himself and his enemies. We like Richard from this opening monologue and we enjoy seeing his misdeeds—until the Princes.

6. The character of King Richard manipulates so many people. How important was it for you to give the character layers so the audience didn’t hate him from the start?

I haven’t performed it yet so the layers will come but I think I just need to settle on playing the role as written. Shakespeare fortunately has given him layers and my job is to dig them out and—hopefully—let them fly. It will be great to see how the characterisation of Richard develops in the rehearsal process.

7. What is the most important part about Richard and Anne’s relationship?

Richard and Anne need each other. After the death of her husband to be and her father, Anne has nothing left. She needs Richard’s position and power and Richard needs her to leverage up the power chain and also, though hidden, to give him a son. It is a co-dependent and unhappy relationship.

8. Why is Richard and Richmond’s relationship so important to the story?

In the old medieval world drama of good angles and bad angles, the characters of Richard and Richmond fit this function very well—with the evil Richard being mirrored by the good Richmond. Richmond is the threat (to Richard) at the end of the play and the hope for a better future. Richard knows this and the drama is underlined by Richard’s quest to defeat the future King.

9. Which themes of King Richard III did you want to stand out the most and why?

I think the themes of corrupting power, the overpowering guilt that must encompass a tyrant no matter how hard he/she tries to dismiss it. The strength of the women in the play; Lady Anne, Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Margaret all help to bring Richard to his downfall by creeping inside his conscience. Richard underestimates the female characters in the play and the effect they have on him.

(This links to Shakespeare’s slightly later play Hamlet, where the lead character says, “Frailty, thy name is women.”)

10. What dramatic techniques did you incorporate into the play?

There will be lots of dramatic techniques and use of multimedia with parallel composition and cutaways of video and live action, puppetry, physical theatre and music. Richard’s world is a world of drama and theatre and so this will be reflected in the final production.

11. How important was the staging in conveying the story?

The story is all. Shakespeare’s play needs to be told with clarity so all the theatrical devices and techniques help to tell the story rather than distract—a simple staging helps.

12. What stylistic choices did you make as a director?

A director makes many choices, from the cutting of the original play through to the use of sound, song, action and concept.

13. What challenges do you face as an actor, performing the role of Richard III?

The challenge is to make Richard as bright, clever and witty as on the written page. All these above tasks have been done by Shakespeare and so an actor’s job is to interpret these moments as truthfully
and as convincingly as he/she can. The physical aspect is the biggest challenge particularly as I want my Richard to be as deformed as described.

14. **What is the most exciting part about directing this play?**

The exciting part is making it work and realising the imagery you have held in your mind for however many number of years. The idea of directing Shakespeare is always very exciting, climbing that mountain and enjoying all the views along the way.

15. **How important are the supernatural elements of the play?**

Very important to the characters (and perhaps the first audiences watching) and as long as we believe they believe the curses, the ghosts, the idea of fate then we will.

16. **What is it that you love about the language of Shakespeare?**

The simple beauty of the words and how a simple phrase can be so breathtaking. I also like the fact it is written to be performed rather than studied.

17. **What aspects of this play have you deliberately manipulated to engage the audience?**

I am not sure I have (or will) deliberately manipulate anything to engage an audience. I think manipulating is perhaps the wrong term for good drama. Reflecting a theatrical slice of life; reminding those who watch what it is humans can do; enjoying the sheer escapism of tragedy and the relief of good over evil; I think those are the elements that have engaged audience for the 400 years or so Shakespeare has been around.
A Summary of the Play

A summary of Mark Kilmurry’s adaptation of Richard III

A man enters his flat, reveals his passion – Richard the Third. Roping in friends and potential girlfriends, the man enacts Shakespeare’s play in the confines of his living quarters, using music, household goods and film...

Richard is malicious, power hungry, obsessive and aspires secretly to the throne – as the man and his friends delve deeper into the dark world of the play, the line between reality and Shakespeare is thrillingly explored with passionate, tragic and hilarious results.

Remaining true to Shakespeare’s dialogue, Mark Kilmurry’s exciting new production honours the original play whilst wildly re-imagining it for new audiences.

A summary of Shakespeare’s original Richard III

Mark summarises the plot in the short film Video 2: The Twists and Turns of Richard III, available online here.

- At the plays opening, England is at peace, following the victory of the House of York and coronation of King Edward IV, following the battle of Mortimer’s Cross (1461). However Richard, Duke of Gloucester, King Edward’s youngest brother, is dissatisfied. Malicious, power hungry and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard begins to aspire to the throne.
- He instigates a rift between his elder brothers, George, The Duke of Clarence and King Edward IV, which leads to Clarence’s imprisonment in the Tower of London. Richard arranges to have Clarence murdered.
- He manipulates Lady Anne Neville into marrying him and she agrees. This is despite Richard’s order resulting in the death of her husband, the Prince of Wales, in battle and the murder of her father in law, Henry VI.
- King Edward IV is slowly dying, as result of an overly indulgent lifestyle. Richard is named as protector of the realm, which is opposed by Edward’s Queen, Elizabeth. Edward calls together his wife and nobles, in order to settle their differences. This is interrupted by Margaret, the previous Queen and widow of Henry VI. She recalls horrors from the past and predicts further horrors in the future. She really hates Richard and curses him and the others responsible for the horrors. Clarence’s death is announced and the shock accelerates King Edward’s illness and results in his death.
- After Edward’s death, he becomes Lord protector of England, effectively acting as King until the elder of Edward IV’s sons grows up.
- He has the princes’ maternal male relatives (Queen Elizabeth’s brothers Grey and Rivers) arrested and executed, removing the protectors of Queen Elizabeth and her children.
- He has his political allies, particularly Lord Buckingham, successfully campaign for Richard to be crowned King.

During this time, Richard effectively imprisons Edward IV’s eldest son, Edward V, in the tower of London, declaring that he is protecting him. Queen Elizabeth claims sanctuary in Westminster Abbey along with her children, including her youngest son, Richard Duke of York. Richard’s allies arrange for the young Prince Richard to be removed from sanctuary and taken to the tower.

Richard learns that Lord Hastings will no longer support his claim to the throne so Richard falsely accuses him of treason and plotting and has him executed. He stages a riot with Buckingham and Catesby, to convince the Lord Mayor that Hastings’ plotting was real.

In order to strengthen Richard’s claim to the throne, Buckingham spreads rumours that Edward VI’s children (including the Prince’s in the tower) are illegitimate and therefore have no rightful claim to the throne. Richard’s supporters then present him to the people as a pious and reluctant heir to the throne and he is acknowledged as King. In order to remove his rivals, Richard III orders Tyrrell to murder the princes.

The people of England begin to fear and loathe him. He has alienated nearly all the noblemen of the court—even his chief supporter Buckingham.

Rumours begin to circulate about the Earl of Richmond, a descendant of a secondary arm of the Lancaster family, gathering forces in France. Noblemen defect in droves to join his attack to claim the throne. In order to support his Kingship, Richard III plans to marry his niece, the young Elizabeth, as Queen Anne is ill. It is implied that he hastens Anne’s death. He begs the former Queen, Elizabeth, to woo her daughter for him. However, Queen Elizabeth stalls him and secretly promises to marry the young Elizabeth to Richmond.

Ultimately, Richmond invades and Richard is killed at the battle of Bosworth Field after he has fought bravely. The night before the battle, the ghosts of the people Richard has had murdered appear to both him and Richmond in a dream, cursing him Richard and praying for Richmond’s success.

A new era of peace settles in England. Richmond is crowned King Henry VII, is officially betrothed to the young Elizabeth and the warring houses of Lancaster and York are united.

For more insight into Richard’s motivation, watch the short film Video 1: Why does Richard do what he does available online here.

Click here to follow a link to a scene-by-scene summary at Sparknotes.com

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http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/richardiii/section1.rhtml
The Playwright

William Shakespeare lived in a time of English economic prosperity, with a growing middle class. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, probably on April 23 1564, during the reign of Elizabeth I. His grandfather had been a tenant farmer. His father, John, was a merchant and held the office of bailiff (equivalent to today’s mayor). Due to the families wealth, William had a good start in life and it is believed he attended the local grammar school where his education would have included Latin and Greek classics, influencing some of the plots of his later plays.

After leaving school, little is known of his life except that, at the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway and became the father of three children. Some scholars believe he was an apprentice to his father, others that he was a schoolteacher and others that he was driven out of Stratford for illegally hunting game on a nearby estate. Others suggest that this William Shakespeare was not the famous writer at all but these theories can be researched elsewhere.

It is known that his father John’s business losses caused him to give up his office of power and that William moved to London, probably for economic reasons. Here he joined a theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain’s men probably taking on many roles within it, including acting, before creating entire plays. His plays can be grouped into three categories, histories, tragedies and comedies. His also wrote poetry, including a collection of sonnets. He owned shares in London theatres, initially The Globe Theatre, a successful theatre on the Southbank in London, and later the Blackfriars Theatre. The Globe theatre burnt down in 1613. Following this, he returned to Stratford, where he owned property, and lived there until his death in 1616, aged 52. Find out more on the Shakespeare’s birthplace website.

Context of the play

Shakespeare wrote a series of history plays, dramatising the history of England from 1398 to 1485 and are his version of the struggle for the English crown. Richard III follows on from Henry VI Part I, II and III and covers an historical time span of 1478-1485.

Shakespeare wrote this play during the reign of Elizabeth I, granddaughter of Henry VII who founded the Tudor dynasty, victorious at the close of the play. Written in the shadow of the Tudor ‘myth’ of the rule of the House of York, although based on historical events, the play cannot be taken as an accurate representation of historical fact and character. When Henry VII came to power, his bloodline link to the throne was perceived by some to be weak but he had however rightfully claimed it in battle. He set about strengthening his claim on the throne and creating an image of himself as a great and good King. Part of this involved damaging the image of the previous rulers, the House of York, particularly by destroying the image of Richard III.

The Death of Richard III

It is a fact that Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth field in 1485, when his army met Richmond’s in battle. He was the last English King to die in battle. A Burgundian account
reports that Richard’s horse foundered in a march on the battlefield and fell, leaving Richard unable to escape. He continued to fight and met with Richmond. A bloody battle commenced and Richard was violently killed. This is supported by several sources of primary evidence and the state of the remains of the skeleton archeologically recovered in Leicester (the remains are strongly scientifically and historically supported to be that of Richard). In his death, he was not treated with respect and glory. It is reported that he was stripped and taken to Leicester, tied to the back of a horse. He was left on public view for two days and then hastily buried, without royal ceremony, at the church of the Greyfriar monks in Leicester. Although Henry VII did pay for a marble tomb to be erected 10 years later, this was destroyed, along with the church, during the dissolution of the monasteries during the English reformation under the reign of Henry VIII (son of Henry VII and father of Elizabeth I).

A biased account of history

Under the reign of the Tudor’s, historians, writers and chroniclers mainly wrote from the Tudor point of view, emphasising the horrors of the civil war and supporting the legitimacy of Henry VII’s claim on the throne, praising the Tudor’s as the bringers of peace and prosperity. Writers painted a dark image of Richard III, stating as fact events that do not have secure primary evidence and have been open to centuries of argument and debate, including:

- Richard wrongfully seizing power
- Murdering Henry VI
- Ordering the murder of the Prince’s in the tower and his wife Anne.

Other slurs stated as fact are perhaps exaggerations, intended to make him seem evil and grotesque, including:

- The description of his physical form, as humpbacked, with a withered arm and a limp: the skeleton found and supported as that of Richard, has scoliosis, a curvature of the spine that, depending on the severity, causes a twisting, a raised shoulder and a lumpy appearance to the back, with side effects on nerves sometimes causing an affect on arms and legs. Scoliosis can be hereditary and some of his known descendants displayed similar signs: his great-great nephew Edward VI described as having one shoulder higher than the other and his great-great-niece Lady Mary Grey described as, ‘extremely short, crookbacked and very ugly.’ Scoliosis obviously does not make a person evil.
- Claims that he was ‘retained in his mothers womb for two years, emerging with teeth and hair to his shoulders’. Babies may sometimes be overdue and can be born with a full head of hair and fingernails but this is clearly an exaggeration.

Popular histories that popularised this image included Sir Thomas More’s History of Richard III (written 1513-18); Polydore Vergil’s Historia Anglia (written at the request of King Henry VIII in 1534 to legitimise the Tudor dynasty); and during the reign of Elizabeth I, Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed incorporated interpretations of these earlier works into their own history.

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10 Hanman, Alison. Richard III and His Early Historians 1483-1535 (1975), pp.120, 121.
11 Hanman, Alison. Richard III and His Early Historians 1483-1535 (1975), pp.120, 121.
books. It would have been this version of history, with a negative portrayal of Richard, which Shakespeare had as he wrote his play.

For a positive view of Richard III, in the light of contemporary historical research, information can be found at The Society of Richard III.

**Society and Culture**

Shakespeare’s play explores issues that still had an effect on current society and the court. This included a fear of a return to the disorder that had preceded the Tudor monarchs. This fear would have affected the people of the Elizabethan court, with many members being descendants of the great 15th Century families, as the succession that would follow the death of Elizabeth I was uncertain and open to debate.

Acting companies were often involved in activities at court and in order to keep royal favour, it is highly likely that Shakespeare would have followed the Tudor biased version of history, ensuring that the Tudor’s looked good in direct contract to the evil Richard.
Characters

Key characters, listed in order of appearance: **Queen Margaret**—widow of Henry VI. Once a powerful enemy, she has been reduced to a shadow of her former self, wandering half mad and weeping over her lost cause. In this interpretation she appears on video screen. Through her curses and visions, she predicts the doom that will come. Attempts to dispute her claims and ignore her curses charge the play with tension. She functions as a Nemesis (the Greek figure of retribution).

*Historical fact*: the character is inaccurate. Following the death of Henry VI, at the time the play is set, she had been exiled to France and remained there until her death.

**Richard III**—begins the play as the Duke of Gloucester, and then becomes Lord Protector and finally King Richard III. Shakespeare makes Richard both a victim of circumstance and master of his own destiny, giving the play an energy and fascination. He tells the audience what he will do and why. He understands the psychology of others and can be very persuasive. He commits some dreadful deeds yet he is also witty. The audience is perhaps invited to consider that Richard is a victim of his nature, circumstance, his deformity and of the past. Many people agree that Richard does not undergo any change from his evil path and that his rapid downfall is deserved. He appears vulnerable when woken from his dream, filled with the ghosts of his victims, yet he soon returns to his villainous ways.

**George, Duke of Clarence**—brother of Richard and Edward IV. Edward IV imprisons him in the Tower of London, owing to the rift that Richard has manipulated. He trusts Richard, who promises that he will soon be released. He has committed a number of crimes and deserves punishment but perhaps not the death he suffers, murdered by two men sent by Richard. He wrestles with his crimes in a dream that also predicts his doom (another example of nemesis).

*Historical fact*: he was executed by being drowned in a butt of wine, on the orders of Edward IV, following a trial for treason.

**The Duke of Buckingham**—He boldly asks for God’s punishment, should he be false to Edward IV and his family. He is foolhardy, ignoring Margaret’s warnings about Richard’s nature and the curse on all who serve him, remembering it and reflecting on the price he has played for falseness at his later execution. He is Richard’s chief ally and does most of his dirty work, while Richard flatters him and plays the naïve pupil. He is raised up by his expectations of land and wealth, stunned when Richard refuses him with contempt;

"I am not in the giving vein today". (Act IV Scene ii, 115).

*Historical fact*: He fled to his castle in Wales and chose to support Richmond but was betrayed by a servant and captured, arrested and executed.

**Lady Anne (Neville)**—daughter of the Duke of Warwick and widow of Henry IV’s son, the former Prince of Wales. She initially demonstrates hatred towards Richard, blaming him for the part he had to play in the death of her husband and her father in law.
**Queen Elizabeth**- the wife of Edward IV. She is a powerful political force in her own right. She arrives in the play on a weak note, bemoaning the King’s illness and her own danger. She is a survivor and although her losses are great, she does not become a victim of Richard’s. She tolerates his clever and skilful arguments but even when she apparently surrenders to Richard’s advances to marry her daughter, the audience later discovers that this is not the case and that the final victory is hers.

**Lord Rivers**- the brother of Queen Elizabeth. **Historical fact**: He was arrested on a charge of treason and executed. Whether he was guilty is open to debate but he was accused of plotting against Richard III, in favour of his nephew Prince Edward.

**First murderer and second murderer**- sent by Richard to kill George. They stab him and drown him in a butt of malmsey wine.

**King Edward IV**- Shakespeare presents him as lazy, lecherous and gullible. Both he and Richard are presented as unsuitable monarchs and Shakespeare is perhaps emphasising the need for a new reign, further supporting the Tudor cause. **Historical fact**: in battle he had twice triumphed over the Lancaster enemy and he had ruled England peacefully for over two decades. He died, aged 40, on April 9 1483, following several attacks of ‘an ague’ attributed to his extravagant lifestyle and a severe cold.

**Duchess of York**- the mother of two Kings (Edward IV and Richard III) and their brother Clarence (for further children, see the family tree). She snarls at Queen Margaret and defends the evil actions of her husband and sons. However, she does not approve of Richard, denying him her blessing and criticizing him. Richard realises the political danger in implicating her as an adulteress in establishing Edward IV line as illegitimate as it would call his own legitimacy into question.

**Prince Edward**- the Prince of Wales, eldest son of King Edward IV and nephew of Richard III. He has leadership ability and is quite arrogant when the audience first meet him. He winds up his Uncle Richard with boyish fantasies of foreign victories.

**Prince Richard**- The Duke of York, younger son of King Edward IV and nephew of Richard III. He is presented as precocious but seemingly content with clever word play with his Uncle.

The brothers remain dangerously alone, without the protection of their maternal uncles. Their part in the play is very interesting for the audience, particularly through their mother and grandmother’s failed attempt to visit them in the tower. They are murdered, on the order of Richard, with Tyrell arranging the murderers.

**Historical fact**- the boys are often collectively referred to as ‘The Princes in the Tower’. What really happened to them has been open to historical debate for centuries. Many people stood to gain from the death of the princes and there are even theories that they escaped. The remains of two young children were found at the Tower in 1674. They were assumed to be the Princes and moved to Westminster Abbey. They were exhumed and examined in 1933 and said to be of the correct age but the date and sex could not be determined. They have
not undergone up to date scientific and DNA testing. The only certainty is that they disappeared.\textsuperscript{12}

**Hastings, (Lord William)**—the Lord Chamberlain. He is only referred to in this adaption of the play but he as an important part of the plot and history. He is a fool whose end is predictable from the start. Beneath his naïve trust lays an ugly lust for revenge (following feuds with the Woodvilles, Queen Elizabeth’s family) that lead to his downfall. He becomes a victim of Richard, who lulls him into a false sense of security and then crushes him. The Nemesis pattern, of prophecy (by Queen Margaret), irony (trust in Richard, failing to take the advice of Stanley to flee North and believing that Richard is incapable of hiding his feelings) and recognition, applies to Hastings. Richard accuses him of being a traitor and has him executed.

**Historical fact:** a council meeting was held the Tower of London on June 13 to discuss the planned coronation of Edward V. According to Tudor account (which is a secondary source and so is open to bias) Stanley slept badly the night before and told Hastings of a nightmare where they were attacked by a boar, the symbol on Richard’s badge, but Hastings dismissed the fears.\textsuperscript{13} Violence occurred and he was arrested by Richard’s men, accused of plotting against Richard, and beheaded on Tower Green. Stanley was arrested but later released.

**Catesby**—a supporter and key advisor of Richard. He served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and speaker of the House of Commons during Richard’s reign.

**Tyrrell**—(Sir James), he is sent by Richard to murder the Princes in the Tower. He arranges for Dighton and Forrest to carry this out. **Historical fact:** in 1502, he was arrested and executed, following confessing to this crime but this was three years after a man named Perkins had also confessed and was executed. Tyrrell’s confession was incorporated into the Tudor histories.\textsuperscript{14}

**Ratcliff**—a supporter of Richard and a trusted advisor. He carries out Richard’s dirty work, including presiding over executions and taking a direct role in the execution of Lord Hastings.

**Richmond**—The Earl of Richmond, Henry Tudor, King Henry VII. The grandfather of Shakespeare’s monarch, Elizabeth I, the character essentially had to emerge victorious and as a peacemaker. He is not introduced until the end of the play, in Act V Scence ii and is presented as a direct contrast to Richard. He is a *deus ex machina* (a God who intervenes in the nick of time).\textsuperscript{15} He is presented as principled, honourable, moral and righteous, fighting for the good of his country. He puts his faith in God. He has not been part of the War of the Roses, the civil war between the House of Lancaster and the House of York, and his innocence is acknowledged by the ghosts. He respects his stepfather, Lord Stanley.

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.richardiii.net/2_5_0_riii_controversy.php
\textsuperscript{15} Baldwin, Pat and Baldwin, Tom (ed.). *Cambridge School Shakespeare-King Richard III* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. p.242
EDWARD III = Phillipa of Hainault
(r.1327-1377) (1311-1369)

(1) Blanche = (3rd son) John of Gaunt = (3) Katherine
of Lancaster Duke of Lancaster Swynford 1st Duke of York of Castille Prince of Wales (1328-1385)
((1345-1369) (1340-1399) (1350-1403) (1341-1402) (1355-1392) (1330-1376)

HENRY IV
John Beaufort (2nd son) Richard = Anne Mortimer
Earl of Somerset Earl of Cambridge (1390-1411) (1367-1400)
(1373-1410) (1375-1415)

HENRY V
(1415-1495)

HENRY VI = Margaret of Anjou
John Beaufort Duke of Somerset
(r.1422-1461, 1470-1471) (1430-1482) (1403-1444)

Edward Prince of Wales
Edmund Tudor = Margaret Beaufort
Richard Plantagenant = Cecily Neville (Duchess of York)
(1453-1471) (1443-1509) (1411-1460)

Edward Prince of Wales
Earl of Derby

EDWARD IV = Elizabeth = Sir John Grey = George = Isabel Neville
Woodville (1432-1461) (1451-1476) (1452-1485)
(r.1461-1470, 1437-1492) (1456-1485) (1439-1476)
(1444-1503) (1467-1495)

Clarence daughter of Richard Earl
of Warwick
(1449-1478) (1415-1495)

Richard Earl of Exeter
(1442-14917) (1433-1477)

Edward Prince of Wales
Earl of Derby

Edward Prince of Wales
Earl of Lincoln

John de la Pole
Edmund de la Pole
Richard de la Pole

Richard Earl of Warwick
(1430-1475)

Sir Richard Grey 1st Marquis of Dorset
(1457-1483) (1462-1505) (1473-1484)

Edward Prince of Wales
Earl of Salisbury
Warwick
(1455-1501) (1473-1541) (1475-1499)

HENRY VII = Elizabeth of York
EDWARD V = Richard Duke of York
Edward Prince of Wales
Earl of Richmond
(1457-1509) (1466-1503) (1473-1483) (1469-1507) (1475-1511)

Princes in the Tower

Kings are in capitols.

Family Tree
Characters that feature in the play are coloured red.
Family members are left out above the level of the three 'sons of York'-the line of succession, as can be
traced back to Edward III, is included.
Main Themes

Activity: list examples for each of the following themes.

Natural order
The attitude towards nature in Elizabethan society was a holdover from medieval times and followed a strict hierarchy: God was at the top; The King ruled the state; the father was head of the family; the mother ruled the children. Following on from this came animals, which were also ranked. Snakes, insects and vermin were at the bottom. Shakespeare uses many animal references as curses in relation to Richard. When the natural order is upset, the bottom moves to the top and there is chaos, with the symbol of a monster. Richard is depicted and referred to as a monster. Only when he dies, ending up in the mud of Bosworth Field, is the natural order restored.

Legitimacy and Usurpation
Kingship was part of the natural order. It was achieved by birth, according to the rules of inheritance. If there was not an immediate heir, the next closest male relative was entitled to the crown. After the death of Henry VIII, women also held the crown but men still came first in the hierarchy. Breaking this natural order, through usurpation (unlawful and illegitimate seizure of the crown) was a major crime as serious as killing the King. It caused chaos, disorder and revolution. This is why Richard is so keen to prove his legitimate claim in the play- that his claim is not so is one of the main messages of the play, therefore in real life supporting the legitimate claim of the House of Tudor.

Church versus state
‘The great King of kings’. It was (and still formally is) believed that God appointed the King as his representative on Earth. This united the secular and spiritual and a crime against the King was a crime against God. The play highlights the powerlessness of the Church against the state when the King is evil. Richard’s hellish origins (cacodemon, hellhound) contrast with references to heaven, angels and saints. Churchmen are present in key scenes and processions, executions and crowds. In their powerlessness, they support Richard’s advancement; the Bishop of Ely is sent to collect strawberries during the violent council meeting; and Richard and Buckingham persuade the church to break the rules of sanctuary in order to take the young Prince Richard to the tower.

On Kingship
The hierarchy has only one King, at the head of the country and government. He had to represent a good and just nation. If he did not, civil order buckled and Shakespeare often represents this with images of disease and other abnormalities.

Sin and Salvation
‘The deed you undertake is damnable’. Elizabethan’s believed that souls lived after death, rewarded or punished by God dependant on spiritual state at death. The belief was that if all
sins were confessed and then forgiven by a priest or mass celebrated, that the soul went to heaven. Grave unconfessed or unforgiven sins sent a soul to hell. Those who had not fully confessed milder sins went to purgatory, where the minor sins were burnt or purged away by remorse.

This is linked to the Elizabethan tradition of morality plays. Characters in the play are regularly reminded of their past sins. Richard reminds Queen Margaret of past cruelties towards his family by hers. Margaret reminds characters of past crimes through her curses and prophesies. Queen Elizabeth and Queen Margaret recall the bad things that have happened in their past. Characters that are about to die at the hands of Richard refer to the importance of prayer, confession and divine forgiveness.

**Conscience**

‘Where’s thy conscience now’? Guilt, a clear sign of conscience, is referred to throughout the play. Conscience strips away the outward show to reveal characters inner feelings. Richard purposefully goes against his conscience and the constraints of morality: ‘I am determined to prove a villain’, yet the nightmare that wakes him the night before his final battle, can be interpreted as his conscience tormenting him. There are many more examples of characters troubled by their conscience.

**Vengeance**

The play is shadowed by revenge for previous crimes. This is particularly clear through Queen Margaret’s curses and prophesies. Throughout the play, previous crimes are referenced in relation to many characters. Clarence’s death, although brought about by Richard for his own gain, and King Edward IV’s subsequent death, can be interpreted as a type of vengeance, for their part in the overthrow of Henry VI and the House of Lancaster.

**Appearance verses Reality**

There is deception throughout the play. Richard uses his skills as actor and manipulator to use false words and appearances to fool other characters. His asides to the audience, letting them in on the tricks that he is playing whilst the other characters are still on stage, is an exciting and engaging part of the performance.

Others characters that hide their true feelings and greatly influence the direction of the plot (and in fact history) include: Stanley, hiding his motive from Richard, particularly connected to Richmond’s invasion; and Queen Elizabeth, when arranging the marriage of her daughter Elizabeth.

Appearance and reality are blurred: with the church aligning itself with an evil King; and noble families attempting to hide previous allegiances and evil acts.

**Fortune**

Elizabethan’s believed in a Wheel of Fortune as an ordered part of the universe, constantly in motion. If you were at the top, you could not afford to be smug, as you would only be
heading back down. Ignoring Fortunes power led to the reverse of position, as seen in: Buckingham’s rise and fall; Margaret and Elizabeth’s former glory; and Richard’s swift descent from King to death.

**Nemesis and Fate**
The play definitely contains politics and religious issues but can also be interpreted as examining nemesis and fate. Nemesis is punishment for doing something wrong and fate a power that makes an event inevitable. These factors formed the pattern of Greek drama, bringing about suffering and death. If this interpretation is followed, Queen Margaret can be interpreted as a prophetess, recalling past evil deeds that highlight the need for Nemesis and predicting the vengeance that will come. Characters recall her prophesies at the moment of their death. Richard acts as an agent of nemesis, causing the deaths of many who can be interpreted as deserving it. However, he fails to see his own fate, caused by his own evil deeds.

**Chorus**
In another comparison with Greek drama, groups of characters function like a Greek chorus, commenting on the action that has taken place. This includes the women and the common citizens.

**Dreams and omens**
These are linked to fate. It was believed that dreams revealed the future, with a foreshadowing of events. Hasting’s wishes he had listened to the revelations in Stanley’s dream. Clarence’s fears for his soul are revealed in his dream. Richard’s nightmare guaranteed his defeat.

Omens were signs of events to come and are a type of superstition, a sign of the future and seen as a threat or warning. Hasting’s ignores omens and The Duchess of York recalls omens connected to Richard’s birth.

**Ambition**
Many of the characters are ambitious. This ambition is presented as both good and evil. On the evil side, Richard is ambitious for the crown and Buckingham seeks political power and the associated rewards. As a mirror of this, Richmond’s hope to win back the English crown and, ”to reap the harvest of perpetual peace”, is presented as good.

**Realpolitik**
This is politics based on practical objectives rather than on ideals. The play explores the harsh reality of the power play as a result of a cruel and ruthless King ruling a corrupt country. Richard makes himself King by manipulating situations and individuals and exploiting divisions. He is depicted as a cunning and cynical politician who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.
**Language and Style**

Mark Kilmurry explains in the following video: The Language of Richard III

Richard III was written early on in Shakespeare’s career. It is sometimes suggested that it is simple in style and the sign of a young playwright. However, the march like rhythm of the text could be viewed as a march towards an inevitable conclusion. The play is mainly written in unrhymed blank verse iambic pentameter. Each ten-syllable line has five unstressed (X) and stressed (/) syllables:

\[
X / X / X / X / X / X
\]

A horse, a horse my kingdom for a horse!

OR Now is the winter of our discontent,

**Imagery**

Emotionally charged words and phrases conjure up vivid mental pictures and associations, intensifying the dramatic and emotional impact of the play, creating a distinctive atmosphere, clear themes and an insight into characters feelings.

Shakespeare uses metaphor and simile to create this imagery. Examples include:

- Richard claiming he is “like the formal Vice, iniquity”.
- In the opening of the play, past battles are described as winter, with the present peace as summer.
- The dead Kind Edward IV and his sons, “The royal tree has left us royal fruit”.
- Richard is described as an animal, including dog, hedgehog, hell-hound, toad, hog and spider
- When imprisoned, Clarence and Hastings are ‘mewed up’ like birds of prey, whereas characters in power are kites, buzzards and eagles.

Personification is used:

- The two murderers call conscience ‘shame faced’.
- Richard uses ‘dull delay’ and ‘snail-paced beggary’.
- The Duchess of York describes England’s earth as being ‘made drunk’.

**Puns**

Richard uses many, turning meanings around to ridicule, embarrass, sneer at or attack characters. He shows his hatred for the Woodvilles (Queen Elizabeth’s family) by using ‘noble’, meaning a person of nobility but also a low value coin. The dual meaning of son/sun (sounding the same in speech) in the opening of the play refers to Edward IV, son of The Duke of York and also the York emblem of the sun. Throughout the play, ‘blood’ has the multi meaning of the family line, actual spilled blood and blood rising in rage.
Key words
Certain words appear throughout, including: blood, grace, God, hate, hell, Lord and murder.

Oaths
A formal promise, in the name of God or a holy person, yet Richard frequently uses it disrespectfully or wickedly.

Antithesis
The play is full of opposites. The opening soliloquy contains many examples:

Winter/summer; smoothed/wrinkled; mounting/capers; stern alarums/merry meetings; rudely stamped/love’s majesty; dreadful marches/delightful measures.

Lists/Copiousness
Shakespeare accumulates descriptions, like a list, intensifying the atmosphere, character and dramatic effect. E.g. Act II Scene i line 38, ‘Deep, hollow, treacherous, and full of guile’. Or the Duchess of York describing Richard:

A grievous burden was thy birth to me. 
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy schooldays frightful, desperate, wild, and furious; 
Thy prime of manhood, daring, bold, and venturous; 
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly and bloody….

Irony
The audience knows something that a character on stage does not. Shakespeare uses verbal and dramatic irony.

Richard frequently says one thing yet means another, which the audience is aware of. Everything he says to Clarence and Hastings has a double meaning, e.g. to Clarence, ‘I will deliver you or else lie for you’, with the audience knowing that he means to murder him (deliver him from life to death).

Examples of dramatic irony, where what is said on stage contradicts action elsewhere in the play, include: Richard being called ‘gentle Uncle’ and ‘kind Uncle’; and Richard appearing between two Bishop’s, contrasting his acts with his supposedly pious ways.

Stichomythia
Shakespeare possibly learnt this from the plays of the Roman playwright Seneca, whose work was popular at the time. Characters take alternate lines, in exact meter, with equal expression, a point and counterpoint format. An excellent example is Act I Scene ii:

Anne I would I knew my heart
Richard ‘Tis figured in my tongue
Anne I fear me both are false.
Richard Then never was man true.
The omission of syllables to complete the iambic pentameter is also an example of Shakespeare writing in natural breaks or pauses. In this scene he also splits the iambic pentameter between the characters (lines 145-150).
Activities and Worksheets

When answering these questions, ensure you include a quote, referencing the act, scene and line and an explanation to support each of your points (Point, Evidence, Explain).

Character summaries
For each character, complete the points below.

- Physical description
- Character qualities
- Their Opinion
- Other characters opinion of them
- Relationships
- Motives

Act and Scene summaries

Act I
1. What tensions between the people in the court have been revealed in this first act? You could try drawing a map to depict this
2. Create a character profile on Richard’s vices and virtues.

Act II
1. Why is there such a division between the Queens family and Richard and the other Lords?
2. There are scenes with children in this act. Why do you think that Shakespeare chose to include them?

Act III
1. What evidence is there that ‘the people’ know what Richard is really like, before they make him King?
2. How many people have died so far in this play? Explain how and why each has died?

Act IV
1. What does Elizabeth say she will tell her daughter about the proposal?
2. What do you think Shakespeare’s opinion of women is, based on what has happened in the play so far?
3. Explain Lord Stanley’s predicament. Why must he support Richard even though he desires to help Richmond?

Act V
1. Why was Richmond presented as the hero in this play?
2. Is Richard correct when he says that when he dies no one will pity him? Does the audience pity him?
3. What challenges would there be in staging this act?
Summary of key quotes

For the following quotes, state:

- The character that says it
- Who they are saying it to
- The significance of the quote

Act I

Scene i

Lines 14-17
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp’d, and want love’s majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;

Lines 24-27
Why, I, in this weak-piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity:

Lines 119-120
Simple, plain Clarence! I do love thee so,
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,

Scene ii

Lines 152-153
Never hung poison on a fouler toad.
Out of my sight! thou dost infect my eyes.

Lines 207-209
Look, how this ring encompasseth thy finger.
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.

Scene iv

Lines 261-264
A bloody deed, and desperately dispatch’d!
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
Of this most grievous guilty murder done!

Act II

Scene i

Lines 60-61
’Tis death to me to be at enmity;
I hate it, and desire all good men’s love.

Scene iv
Line 57
I see, as in a map, the end of all.

Act III

Scene i

Lines 12-15
Those uncles which you want were dangerous;
Your grace attended to their sugar'd words,
But look'd not on the poison of their hearts:
God keep you from them, and from such false friends!

Lines 68-69
I do not like the Tower, of any place.
Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?

Line 79
So wise so young, they say, do never live long.

Scene v

Line 29
So smooth he daub'd his vice with show of virtue,

Line 41-43
What, think You we are Turks or infidels?
Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly to the villain's death,

Scene vii

Lines 208-210
Loath to depose the child, Your brother's son;
As well we know your tenderness of heart
And gentle, kind, effeminate remorse,

Act IV

Scene i

Line 55-56
A cockatrice hast thou hatch'd to the world,
Whose unavoided eye is murderous.

Lines 79-80
Even in so short a space, my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words

Lines 99-101
Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes
Whom envy hath immured within your walls!
Rough cradle for such little pretty ones!

**Scene iv**

*Lines 22-24*
Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs,
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?

*Lines 26-30*
Blind sight, dead life, poor mortal living ghost,
Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by life usurp'd,
Brief abstract and record of tedious days,
Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
Unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood!

*Lines 116-117*
O thou well skill'd in curses, stay awhile,
And teach me how to curse mine enemies!

*Line 195*
Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end;

**Act V**

**Scene iii**

*Lines 196-198*
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

*Lines 203-206*
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul shall pity me:
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?

**Scene iv**

*Line 7*
A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!

**Scene v**

*Line 19*
We will unite the white rose and the red:
Practice questions

1. You are an actor playing Richard III. Explain the challenges you face in performing your role.

2. How are dramatic techniques used to explore themes in King Richard III?

3. Irony can take many forms. Show how it is an important dramatic device in the play?

4. In Shakespeare’s later play Hamlet, the title character says, ‘Frailty, thy name is woman.’ To what extent is this true in King Richard III? Examine the characters of the women in light of this quotation.

5. Compare and contrast Richard and Richmond. In particular, analyse their claims to the throne and the way they affect their supporters. Your answer should analyse the affects their addresses have on their troops.

HSC English (Advanced) Transformations Module A: Comparative Study of Texts and Context—Elective 1, exploring connections past questions

20 marks—in your answer you will be assessed on how well you:
- Demonstrate understanding of the meanings of a pair of texts when considered together
- Evaluate the relationships between text and contexts
- Organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed texts.

1. In what ways is your appreciation of both texts enhanced by a comparative study of authority in King Richard III and Looking for Richard? (2013)

2. Our interest in the parallels between King Richard III and Looking for Richard is further enhanced by consideration of their marked differences in textual form. Evaluate this statement in light of your comparative study of King Richard III and Looking for Richard. (2012)


4. Analyse how the central values portrayed in King Richard III are creatively reshaped in Looking for Richard. (2010)

5. A deeper understanding of ambition and identity emerges from pursuing the connections between King Richard III and Looking for Richard. Compare how these texts explore ambition and identity? (2009)

6. ‘By comparing two related texts, a responder can compare the governing values of the context in which the work was composed.’ Evaluate the validity of this statement with reference to Richard III and Looking for Richard.

7. ‘Exploring the associations between texts allows insight into the ideas that the texts present.’ Discuss the insight gained through connecting Richard III and Looking for Richard.
Bibliography

Books


Websites


Shakespeare birthplace trust [www.shakespeare.org.uk](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk)

Sparknotes summary [www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/richardiii](http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/richardiii)

The Richard III Society [www.richardiii.net](http://www.richardiii.net)
About the Theatre

"The Ensemble Theatre aims to produce live theatre of the highest quality that entertains, educates, enlightens and challenges. The Ensemble believes that theatre can, and should be, a civilizing influence in society."

The Ensemble Theatre in Kirribilli, Sydney is Australia’s longest, continuously running professional theatre company and has constantly maintained the highest standards in theatrical presentation.

Since its inception, the Ensemble has presented over 350 productions at its home venue, the Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, Theatre Royal and the Seymour Centre. The company has also toured many productions around Australia including, Frankenstein, (to 28 venues through 2013), Tuesdays with Morrie (2011 Drover Award for Best Touring Production), Halpern & Johnson, with Garry McDonald and Henri Szeps, Rain Man, Mixed Emotions, Face to Face, A Conversation, Flatfoot and Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks (2007 Helpmann Award for Best Regional Touring Production). Ensemble productions have also been presented overseas including the 1980 UK tour of No Room for Dreamers and End of the Rainbow, which featured at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Many of Australia’s favourite performers have appeared at the Ensemble Theatre including Lorraine Bayly, Simon Burke, Michael Craig, Russell Crowe, Max Cullen, David Field, Max Gillies, Nancye Hayes, Reg Livermore, Garry McDonald, Todd McKenney, Amanda Muggleton, Caroline O’Connor, Georgie Parker, Marina Prior, Kate Raison, Henri Szeps, Jack Thompson, William Zappa and international performers such as Warren Mitchell and Greta Scacchi.16

Theatre etiquette

The company loves performing for students, and appreciates the effort teachers go to in order to organise such excursions. They relish and encourage natural audience reactions to the performance. The immediate response an actor receives from the audience is part of what makes theatre so special. However, there are a few important points of theatre etiquette to pass onto students before the performance to ensure the enjoyment and safety of all involved:

- All mobiles phones must be turned off (not just on silent) and remain off for the entire performance.
- No photos, videos or sound recordings are to be taken in the auditorium. Camera flashes are particularly distracting and dangerous in an auditorium.
- No food or drink is permitted in the auditorium.
- Audience members are not permitted to walk on the stage or to touch any props.
- It’s always useful to remind students that, unlike television, the performance is live, and that the actors can see and hear everything in the audience. So, please refrain from talking or taking notes during the show.