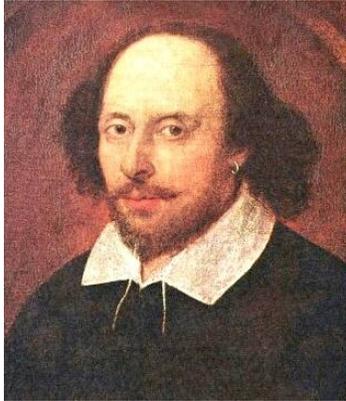


# RICHARD III

by William Shakespeare



## THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the family of a prosperous tradesman in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. While in his mid-teens, he was forced to leave school because his family fell into a period of poverty, so that he had only a rudimentary education. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior and already three months pregnant. The marriage produced three children in three years, but in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London to seek his fortune in the big city.

In London, he embarked upon a career on the stage, becoming a popular actor by the early fifteen nineties. In 1591, he penned his first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*. His early plays were comedies, and show nothing of the depth that characterized his later works. His plots were borrowed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary. During his career, he wrote 37 plays, three narrative poems, and 154 sonnets.

His writing brought him fame and popularity, but he continued to act as well as write (critics love to speculate about which of the characters in his plays would have been played by the author). He eventually became a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men when James I ascended the throne). Most of his plays were performed at local theaters like the Rose, the Globe, and the indoor Blackfriars. When the Globe burned to the ground in 1613 (a cannon misfired during a performance of *Henry VIII*), Shakespeare retired, and died in Stratford three years later on his fifty-second birthday.

*Richard III* was written in 1592, after the completion of the three *Henry VI* plays. The play is both a history play and a tragedy. From an historical standpoint, *Richard III* is the last of the eight plays spanning the period of the Wars of the Roses; the overthrow of Richard II initiates the conflict between the houses of Lancaster and York, and the defeat of Richard III at Bosworth Field by the man who is to become Henry VII ends the war and begins the Tudor dynasty, of which Elizabeth was the final ruler. Shakespeare's main source was Holinshed's *Chronicles*, though Holinshed himself borrowed heavily from Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard the Third*; both show the same Tudor bias against Richard that appears in Shakespeare's work. As with many

of Shakespeare's history plays, *Richard III* is less than historically accurate. Many historians dispute Richard's culpability for the death of Clarence and the murder of the princes in the Tower, but Shakespeare, writing during the reign of Elizabeth, chose to glorify her grandfather, Henry VII, who overthrew Richard, by making the latter look like a monster. The wooing of Anne beside Henry VI's coffin by Richard is a complete fabrication by Shakespeare. Queen Margaret, whose prophecies play a key role in the play, was in France during the entire time when the events in the play took place. The role of Richard is a great one for actors, as are most Shakespearean villains, but the play is a challenging one for students because of the number of characters who bear the same names (three Edwards, two Richards, two Henries, two Elizabeths).

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Richard III (Duke of Gloucester) - The younger brother of Edward IV, he is a malignant hunchback who murders and schemes his way to the throne, but is killed in the battle of Bosworth Field.
- Lady Anne Neville - Widow of Edward Prince of Wales, son of Henry VI, she marries Richard despite the fact that he killed her husband and his father; he later has her killed.
- Edward IV - King of England as the play begins, he is a Yorkist who took the throne from the Lancastrians through the death of Henry VI. He dies early in the play.
- Queen Elizabeth - Wife (and soon widow) of Edward IV.
- Edward V and Richard of York - Sons of Edward IV, these are the young princes who are murdered in the Tower of London by order of Richard of Gloucester.
- George, Duke of Clarence - Brother of Edward IV and Richard of Gloucester, he is framed by a cryptic prophecy and is drowned in a cask of wine in the Tower by murderers hired by his brother Richard.
- Duchess of York - Elderly mother of Edward IV, Clarence, and Richard.
- Henry, Earl of Richmond - Victor at Bosworth Field, he kills Richard in combat and becomes King Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty.
- Duke of Buckingham - Richard's chief henchman and most loyal co-conspirator, he later turns against Richard when the latter refuses to fulfill his promises to him; he is ultimately captured and executed by order of Richard.
- Lord Hastings - Lord Chamberlain of England; a friend of Richard who refuses to support him as king and dies as a result.
- Lovell and Ratcliffe - Noble supporters of Richard who execute Hastings.

- William Catesby - A supporter of Richard to the end, implicated in many of his atrocities.
- Sir James Tyrrel - An impoverished nobleman hired by Richard to murder the princes in the Tower; he gets two other men, Dighton and Forrest, to do the deed.
- Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby - A supporter of Richard who betrays him when Richard holds his son George hostage and threatens to kill him.
- Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers - Brother of Queen Elizabeth, executed by order of Richard.
- Marquis of Dorset, Lord Grey - Sons of Queen Elizabeth by a prior marriage; Grey is executed by order of Richard.
- Queen Margaret - Widow of King Henry VI, she is an old woman who returns from exile to place a curse on all the members of the house of York.

### NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.” (Richard, Ii, 1-2)

“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.” (Richard, Ii, 117-120)

“Take up the sword again, or take up me.” (Richard, Iii, 183)

“Because I cannot flatter and look fair,  
Smile in men’s faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,  
Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,  
I must be held a rancorous enemy.” (Richard, Iiii, 47-50)

“I’ll not meddle with it; it makes a man a coward. A man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; and man cannot swear, but it checks him; and man cannot lie with his neighbor’s wife, but it detects him. ‘Tis a blushing shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man’s bosom. It fills a man full of obstacles. It made me once restore a purse of gold that, by chance, I found. It beggars any man that keeps it. It is turned out of towns and cities for a dangerous thing, and every man that means to live well endeavors to trust to himself and live without it.” (Second Murderer [speaking of his conscience], Iiv, 136-146)

“God keep me from false friends,  
But they were none.” (Edward V, IIIi, 16-17)

“They smile at me who shortly shall be dead.” (Hastings, IIIiv, 106)

“I am not in the giving vein today.” (Richard, IVii, 115)

“From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept  
A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death.” (Queen Margaret, IViv, 47-48)

“He hath no friends but what are friends for fear,  
Which in his dearest need will fly from him.” (Sir James Blunt, Vii, 20-21)

“Conscience is but a word that cowards use,  
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.” (Richard, Viii, 310-311)

“A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!” (Richard, Viv, 7)

## NOTES

**Act I, scene 1** - Richard, Duke of Gloucester, a malevolent hunchback, begins with a soliloquy in which he declares himself a villain and announces his intention to dispose of his brother George, Duke of Clarence. Clarence then enters under guard, having been arrested because a prophecy proclaimed that the heirs to the throne should be murdered by someone whose name began with G. Richard encourages him, but as soon as he leaves Richard goes to visit his brother King Edward IV in order to poison his mind against Clarence and bring about his execution. Richard also tells the audience that he plans to get rid of the king's sons and marry Anne, the widow of the late Edward Prince of Wales, son of the recently-deceased Henry VI. We also learn that Edward IV is quite ill.

**Act I, scene 2** - The scene begins with the funeral procession of Henry VI; the late king is mourned by his daughter-in-law, Lady Anne, whose husband also died in the Yorkist overthrow of the House of Lancaster that brought Edward IV to the throne. As she mourns, she calls down a curse on Richard, who was responsible for the king's untimely demise. When Richard appears, she vents her spleen on him. Richard, however, woos her, telling her that he killed her husband and father-in-law because of his love for her. He gives her his sword and bares his breast, but she lacks the nerve to kill him. He even offers to kill himself at her command, but she cannot do it. When he puts his ring on her finger, she is unable to resist him. After she leaves, he tells the audience that he courted her for his own pleasure and as a means to an end - the attainment of the throne.

**Act I, scene 3** - The scene begins with Queen Elizabeth, wife of the seriously ill Edward IV, surrounded by Lord Rivers (her brother), and Lords Dorset and Grey (her sons). They fear that should the king die, Richard of Gloucester would be named the guardian of the king's young sons. Richard enters and they begin quarreling, each accusing the other faction of currying favor and seeking self-aggrandizement. Old Queen Margaret, the widow of Henry VI, then enters, and after listening to their quarrels and making nasty side-comments, curses them all, saying that Elizabeth will become like her, bereft of husband and children and no longer queen, that her retainers will

die violent deaths, and that Richard will become alienated from all around him by his own treachery. Richard responds by expressing concern for the welfare of Clarence, but as soon as the others leave, two murderers he has hired enter, and he gives them a warrant for the murder of Clarence in the Tower of London.

**Act I, scene 4** - Clarence, in the Tower of London, has just awakened from a nightmare in which he dreamed that he and Richard were on a boat, that Richard pushed him overboard, and that he drowned and was confronted by those whose deaths he had caused, then taken to hell. He goes back to sleep, but soon the murderers arrive with their warrant. They have pangs of conscience, and Clarence awakes and tries to convince them to spare him. They finally reveal that his brother Richard, far from seeking his release, was the one who had hired them to kill him. He cries out, but they stab him and finally drown him in a cask of wine, though they regret it afterward.

**Act II, scene 1** - King Edward, gravely ill, seeks to reconcile his feuding nobles. They agree to make peace with one another - including Richard, who claims to desire the love of all. When Queen Elizabeth pleads for a pardon for Clarence, the king agrees to it, but Richard tells him that his retraction of the order of execution comes too late - that Clarence is already dead. All are shocked, but Richard later tries to convince Buckingham that the queen's retainers were about to plead for his death.

**Act II, scene 2** - The Duchess of York enters with her two grandchildren, the son and daughter of Clarence. She mourns for the condition of the kingdom and tells the children that Richard, not the king, was responsible for their father's death. Queen Elizabeth then enters with a group of nobles and announces the king's death. All mourn and pledge to maintain the peace so recently sworn among them. Plans are made to crown young Edward, son of the dead king, as Edward V. Buckingham and Richard plot to make sure that they are among the courtiers sent to fetch the boy for his coronation.

**Act II, scene 3** - A group of citizens are discussing the death of the king. They fear the consequences of the elevation of a child to the throne, but recognize success or failure depends on the quality of those who control the regency. They seem to have little confidence in Richard or in the relatives of the queen, however.

**Act II, scene 4** - The Archbishop of York, the Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, and her young son Richard Duke of York await news of Edward Prince of Wales as he travels toward his coronation. Instead, they receive news that Richard and Buckingham have ordered the arrest of Rivers, Grey, and others of the queen's faction. The queen and young Richard decide to seek sanctuary in the cathedral.

**Act III, scene 1** - Edward arrives for his coronation accompanied by Richard and Buckingham and wonders why his mother and brother are not waiting to meet him. They are told he is in sanctuary, and Buckingham orders him brought forth. Richard then advises the two young princes to stay in the Tower of London until the coronation for their own safety. They reluctantly agree after some banter between the children and their uncle. Richard is now ready to hatch his plot, and sends Catesby to sound out Hastings and find if he is on their side; if not, he is to be

beheaded. He also sends word for the execution of Rivers, Grey, and the others arrested previously, and offers Buckingham the earldom of Hereford as a reward.

**Act III, scene 2** - Lord Stanley, the Earl of Derby, sends a messenger to Lord Hastings to warn him to flee to the north, since he had a dream that showed his head being cut off by a boar. Hastings refuses to run, since he knows that his friend Catesby is in Richard's confidence. Catesby then arrives and sounds out Hastings about the idea of Richard as king, but Hastings quickly opposes the whole idea. He then leaves to go to the Tower of London to meet with Richard, not knowing he will never leave there alive.

**Act III, scene 3** - Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan are executed at Pomfret Castle.

**Act III, scene 4** - Nobles gather at the Tower to plan the coronation ceremony. Richard claims that his arm is withered, bewitched by the queen; Hastings affirms that if she has done such a thing, she is worthy of death. The word "if" is enough; Richard proclaims Hastings a traitor and orders Lovell and Ratcliffe to behead him. Hastings bemoans his foolish confidence in Richard and foresees a bloodbath in the future.

**Act III, scene 5** - Richard is giving instructions to Buckingham to go among the crowds in disguise and spread rumors that his brother Edward had been illegitimate and immoral, and that the young boys in the Tower were also born out of wedlock. Lovell and Ratcliffe then arrive with the head of Hastings. Richard convinces the Lord Mayor of London of the perfidy of Hastings and encourages him to squelch any rumors against him among the people gathered outside the Tower. Meanwhile, he gives orders that no visitors are to be granted admittance to see the young princes.

**Act III, scene 6** - A scrivener reads the indictment against Hastings and notes that it had been written the day before his supposedly treasonous words, his arrest, and his execution.

**Act III, scene 7** - At Baynard's Castle Richard's supporters gather. Buckingham advises him to surround himself with clergymen so as to appear pious, and to refuse the crown when offered before ultimately accepting it. Richard takes this advice, and when Buckingham offers him the crown before the gathered throng, he twice refuses it, then finally accepts when they tell him the young Edward will never be the king, but a new dynasty will come to power if he persists.

**Act IV, scene 1** - The Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, and Anne meet outside the Tower intending to visit the princes, but they are denied admittance. The Earl of Derby arrives to bring Anne to Richard's coronation. Meanwhile, Elizabeth retreats to sanctuary while Dorset flees to join the Earl of Richmond.

**Act IV, scene 2** - Richard is preparing to be crowned king and is cleaning up loose ends. He asks Buckingham to kill the two young princes in the Tower, but he is reluctant to do so. Richard determines never to trust him again, and turns to an impoverished noble, Sir James Tyrrel, to do the task. He also puts out the word that his wife Anne is seriously ill. Buckingham then asks Richard to keep his promise and give him the earldom of Hereford, but Richard ignores him and

frets over a prophecy that Richmond would be king and that he would not live long after seeing him. After Richard openly rejects Buckingham's offer, he realizes he has aligned himself with an ingrate and decides to flee for his life to join Richmond.

**Act IV, scene 3** - Richard's schemes now come to fruition. Tyrrel hires two men, Dighton and Forrest, to kill the princes; they smother them, though with great sorrow. Richard imprisons Clarence's young son and marries his daughter off to an impoverished noble, kills his wife Anne, then turns his attentions to Elizabeth, the young daughter of Edward IV, intending to marry her himself before Richmond can do so and legitimize his claim to the throne. Meanwhile, he hears that many nobles, including Buckingham, have defected to Richmond and are gathering armies against him.

**Act IV, scene 4** - Queen Margaret, Queen Elizabeth, and the Duchess of York gather to mourn their respective loved ones, though they in turn blame one another's offspring for the various deaths. Queen Margaret leaves for France, and the other two meet Richard on his way to battle and curse him, telling him their prayers will support his enemies. His mother says she will never speak to him again. Richard then tells Elizabeth that he means to marry her daughter and make her Queen of England, but Elizabeth mocks him. He also offers to raise Dorset to high favor after he defeats Buckingham's army. After pages of banter, Elizabeth relents and agrees to carry the king's message to her daughter. As soon as she leaves, Richard mocks her weakness. He then receives a flurry of messengers bringing news about the war. Richmond has set sail for England from Brittany and Buckingham has gone west to join him. Others rise against him as well. Lord Stanley says he has followers in the north, and Richard tells him to go get them, but keeps his son George behind as a hostage should his father desert. After being driven back by a storm Richmond lands, but Buckingham is captured by Richard's men after his army is dispersed.

**Act IV, scene 5** - Lord Stanley sends a letter to Richmond pledging his support, but says he cannot proclaim his allegiance because his son George is held by Richard. Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth has promised her daughter to Richmond in marriage.

**Act V, scene 1** - Buckingham is led to execution, remembering the curse placed upon him by Queen Margaret and the sins oaths of loyalty he so blithely swore and as easily violated.

**Act V, scene 2** - Richmond and his nobles are now a day's march away from Richard's army. All Richard's supporters are deserting him except those he holds by fear.

**Act V, scene 3** - Both armies arrive at Bosworth Field. Richmond sends a message to Stanley summoning him secretly to his tent. Richard, meanwhile, sends a message to Stanley to bring his troops to the fore immediately or risk the death of his son. The ghosts of those murdered by Richard then appear, cursing him and encouraging Richmond - Edward Prince of Wales, Henry VI, Clarence, Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, Hastings, the young princes, Anne, and Buckingham. Richard awakes in panic, his conscience troubling him and pronouncing him a villain. He hates himself and is sure that no one will pity him when he dies. He then goes out to eavesdrop on his men's conversations to see if any plan to desert him. Richmond, meanwhile, rises refreshed because of the good dream he had, then speaks to his gathered army. Richard sets forth his battle

plan, but Norfolk reports to him that he has received a note warning that Richard has been betrayed for a bribe. Richard then addresses his troops, focusing mostly on the haggard nature of the enemy. As the battle begins, he calls for Stanley's regiment to come forward, but is told that Stanley has deserted. He orders his son George beheaded, but is told there is not time, since the enemy advances.

**Act V, scene 4** - Richard fights valiantly but is unhorsed. Catesby comes to rescue him, but he refuses to leave the field, insisting that he has slain five Richmonds and is merely looking for the real one.

**Act V, scene 5** - Richard and Richmond fight and Richard is killed. Stanley brings the crown to Richmond, who announces that the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York will now be united through his marriage with young Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, animal images are used frequently in reference to the protagonist, both by Richard himself and by others. What are the functions of these images in defining the character of Richard? Note that not all have the same purpose, so be sure your essay contains more than a list and goes into greater depth than simply saying that the images show Richard to be a bad person.
2. Compare and contrast the battlefield orations of Richmond in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and the king in *Henry V*. Address both content and tone of the speeches. What evidence do you see of the greater maturity of Shakespeare's art in the latter, written six years later?
3. Evaluate the wooing of Lady Anne by the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Do you find her submission to his advances credible? Why or why not? Be sure to analyze the specific language of his courtship speeches in writing your essay.
4. Evaluate the attempt by Richard to convince Queen Elizabeth to convey his offer of marriage to her daughter in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Do you find her submission to his arguments credible? Why or why not? Be sure to analyze the specific language of his arguments, his masterful use of psychology and her responses in writing your essay.
5. Evaluate Richard as an actor in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Consider the various personas he takes on and the effectiveness with which he portrays them. Why is he able to fool others so easily? Why do most people have so much trouble detecting the protagonist's perfidy while a few seem able to see right through him?

6. Would you consider the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* to be Machiavellian in his efforts to gain and keep the throne? Refer to specific pieces of advice in Machiavelli's *The Prince* and show the extent to which Richard puts that advice into practice.
7. Discuss the use of humor by the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Normally in Shakespearean tragedies, the playwright includes a clown who is the chief source of humor, but in this play, most of the humor comes from the words of the protagonist. How effective is this device? How does this approach give the audience insights into Richard's character? Be sure to cite specific speeches in answering the question.
8. Evaluate the film version of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* in which the protagonist is played by Ian McKellen. Pay special attention to the Nazi-like Britain in which the film is set. Does the setting, in your opinion, help to bring out the themes of the play, or is it a distraction? How effectively does McKellen convey the subtleties of Richard's character?
9. William Shakespeare's *Richard III* is a history play, but also contains many elements of tragedy. Evaluate Richard III as a tragic hero. Does he have the qualities that such a hero should possess, or is he more of a comic-book villain? Support your assessment with specifics from the play.
10. To what extent does William Shakespeare's *Richard III* present a picture of "chickens coming home to roost" - of those who have sinned against others getting their just deserts? With the exceptions of the princes in the Tower, did those who were killed by Richard get what they deserved? Why or why not? Be sure to consider the prior actions of the people concerned, not just the things that happened within the time frame of the play itself.
11. In William Shakespeare's *Henry VI, part 3*, the playwright lays the foundation essential for establishing several key characters that will later play important roles in *Richard III*. Give special attention to the three sons of the Duke of York - Edward, Clarence, and Richard. Why is the character development found in the earlier play essential to an understanding of the action in the later one?
12. In William Shakespeare's *Henry VI, part 3*, the playwright lays the foundation essential for establishing several key characters that will later play important roles in *Richard III*. Give special attention to the two queens, Margaret and Elizabeth, who appear in both plays. To what extent are their characters in the latter play extensions of what we see of them in the earlier one, and to what extent does the latter play show these women in ways we would not have been led to expect? Discuss the consistency with which Shakespeare portrays these women in the two plays.

13. To what extent does William Shakespeare's *Richard III* provide closure for the rebellion described in *Henry VI, part 3*? Be sure to give special attention to the characters who appear in both plays. How do the sins they commit in the earlier play come back to haunt them in the later one?
14. To what extent does William Shakespeare's *Richard III* demonstrate repentance among those who have sinned? Choose three characters who demonstrate repentance and assess those words of repentance from a biblical standpoint. Are these penitent words genuine, or simply sorrow at having been caught at last? Why do you think so?
15. Lily Campbell, commenting on the difference between history and tragedy, says the following: "Tragedy deals with an ethical world; history with a political world. In tragedy God avenges private sins; in history the King of kings avenges public sins, those of king and subject alike." Based on this definition, do you think that William Shakespeare's *Richard III* is more a history or a tragedy? Defend your conclusion with specifics from the play.
16. Discuss the role of the supernatural in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Consider elements like prophecies, dreams, and ghosts in your essay. How do these elements contribute to the moral universe of the play? To what extent is that moral universe a Christian one?
17. Compare the prophecies of Queen Margaret in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* to those of the witches in *Macbeth*. Consider the tone, atmosphere, and content of the respective prophecies as well as their impact on those to whom they are spoken. Do the prophecies drive the plots or simply serve as foreshadowing devices?
18. Compare and contrast the protagonists in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. In what ways are their actions, motivations, and final destinies similar? In what ways are they different? To what extent do the differences show the maturing of Shakespeare's art over a period of more than a decade between the writing of the two plays?
19. Compare and contrast the overall themes of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. Consider that the former was written a decade before Elizabeth's death, while the latter was written shortly after the uncovering of the Gunpowder Plot during the reign of James I. How do the political situations in England during the two eras affect the plots of the plays? Give special attention to the reasons why Richard and Macbeth are portrayed as villains, relating those reasons to the dangers faced by the kingdom under Elizabeth and James, respectively.
20. Discuss the theme of vengeance in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and evaluate the extent to which Shakespeare deals with the subject biblically. Consider three specific cases of people seeking revenge and the consequences of their acts of vengeance, evaluating each from the standpoint of Scripture.

21. In the book of Habakkuk, the prophet wonders how God can use an evil nation like the Babylonians to punish disobedient Judah. God explains that the wicked, after being used as God's instruments of vengeance, will themselves suffer judgment. Compare this theme of the book of Habakkuk with William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. In what ways is the protagonist like the Babylonians, an instrument of God's judgment who later is himself punished for the sins he committed in carrying out that judgment?
22. Discuss the use of dramatic parallelism in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Consider parallel scenes that recur in different places in the play (two wooing scenes, two murder scenes in the Tower, etc.). What is the function of these parallel scenes? Why does Shakespeare make use of this sort of duplication?
23. Discuss the use of rhetorical parallelism in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Pay special attention to the wooing scenes with Anne and Elizabeth in this regard. What impact on the reader or listener is achieved by the obviously artificial parallel structure of statement and response in these dialogues? Why does such rhetorical structure pose special challenges to the actors playing the scenes?
24. Discuss the use of observations about the weather in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. What understanding of the nature of the universe is contained in such observations? To what extent is such a view of nature biblical, and to what extent is it pagan? In what other plays of Shakespeare that you have read do you see similar ideas expressed?
25. Discuss the roles played by the women in the cast of William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Give special attention to their power or lack thereof. To what extent are both their power and their impotence revealed through the medium of words? Choose three women from the cast and use details from their scenes and speeches to support your answer.
26. Evaluate the morality of the behavior of Lord Stanley in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Was he a traitor to his liege lord, a man of conscience who could not obey a vicious master, or a weakling who tried to sit on the fence in order to preserve his own life and that of his son? Support your conclusion with details from the play, and assess his behavior on the basis of Scripture.
27. Discuss the relationship between the protagonist's physical deformity and his personality and behavior in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Is his twisted spine the outward manifestation of a twisted soul, as the Elizabethans believed? Is it the cause of his misanthropy, as sociologists might suggest? Or is his lust for power a matter of overcompensating for his sense of inferiority, as some psychologists have theorized? Evaluate these three theories and support your conclusion with details from the play.

28. In three of William Shakespeare's plays, the main character is alienated from the society in which he lives because of what would today be considered his status as a minority - Othello is black, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* is Jewish, and Richard III, a hunchback, is physically handicapped. Based on the content of the plays themselves, which minority group would you conclude was the object of the greatest discrimination in Elizabethan England? Which of the three treatments is most acceptable to modern sensibilities? Why do you think so?