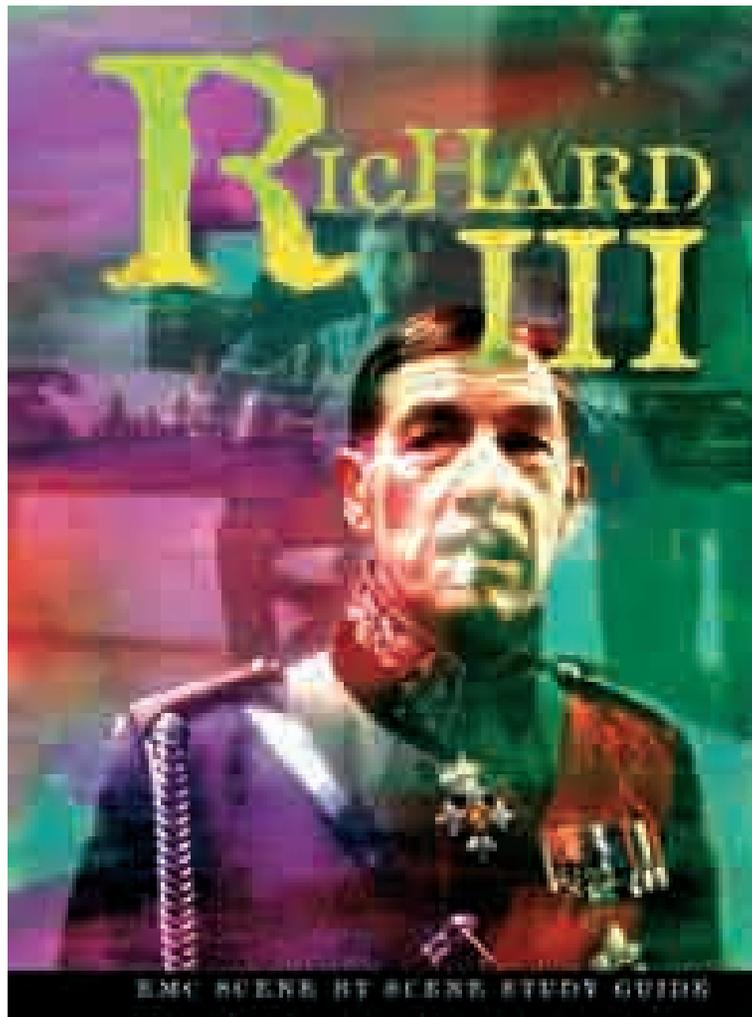


# Richard III: an EMC Study Guide



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## A note on the text

All quotations are taken from the Longman School Shakespeare.

## Using film versions

All three film versions referred to below are readily available on DVD and VHS video at a reasonable cost. Scenes given in brackets refer to scenes from the DVD menu.

### **Richard III: Laurence Olivier (1955)**

The classic 'men in tights' version with the inimitable Olivier who won a BAFTA for the role. A more expensive 'special edition' version of the DVD is taken from a digitally-restored print of *Richard III* and includes *The Trial of Richard III* (1984) – a 3½ hour show in which a jury decide whether Richard is guilty of the murder of the princes using historical evidence and expert witnesses.

#### **Why you might want to use this film:**

- Makes the most of the pomp and ceremony of court life to bring home the contrast between appearance and reality.
- Brings out the intrigue with lots of whispering in doorways and point of view shots as if characters are being spied on (for example Hastings is shown with his mistress).
- Particularly interesting to compare with the McKellen version, for example the opening soliloquies are delivered in very different styles.
- Olivier addresses the camera directly in the asides, drawing in the audience, much as a stage actor would.

#### **Cautionary notes:**

Scenes are cut together and the order of events sometimes changed. If viewing the key scenes, make sure students are secure in their knowledge of the order of events before viewing. However, this can lead to some interesting discussion about why and how things have been changed.

### **Richard III: Ian McKellen version**

1995 production staged in an alternative fascist England in the 1930s.

#### **Why you might want to use this film:**

- Students may find this film version more accessible because of the up-dated setting and the modern delivery of the lines.
- The updated setting works well – for example Richard delivering his speech accepting the crown to a fascist-style rally. This could lead to an interesting discussion about other possible times and places which would suit the play.
- McKellen's Richard is both evil and magnetic and there is a genuinely sinister atmosphere.

#### **Cautionary notes:**

Speeches have been cut and the timeline slightly altered (see cautionary note on the Olivier version). The film starts before the events of the play, with the killing of the Prince of Wales and Henry VI by Richard. Because of the updated setting students may confuse the film version with Shakespeare's version, for example in the film Anne becomes a drug addict.

### **Looking for Richard**

This is a documentary about the play with Al Pacino on a quest to make *Richard III* accessible. This film is a mixture of discussion, vox pop, rehearsal and performance.

#### **Why you might want to use this film:**

- Key events in each act described in user-friendly language. Could be useful revision of plot. Act 1 is covered particularly well (scenes 4-13)
- Footage of Pacino and friends performing extracts is interspersed with the actors and others discussing what they think is happening, and debating issues in the play.
- Pacino is refreshingly open about struggling with the language and plot in a way that students might find reassuring (for example scenes 3 and 9).
- Cast meetings in which the actors discuss how to play the scene (for example the discussion about the opening of Act 1, Scene 3 in scene 8) would draw attention to the possibility of alternative interpretations and would be a useful introduction to any activity where students are asked to think like a director.

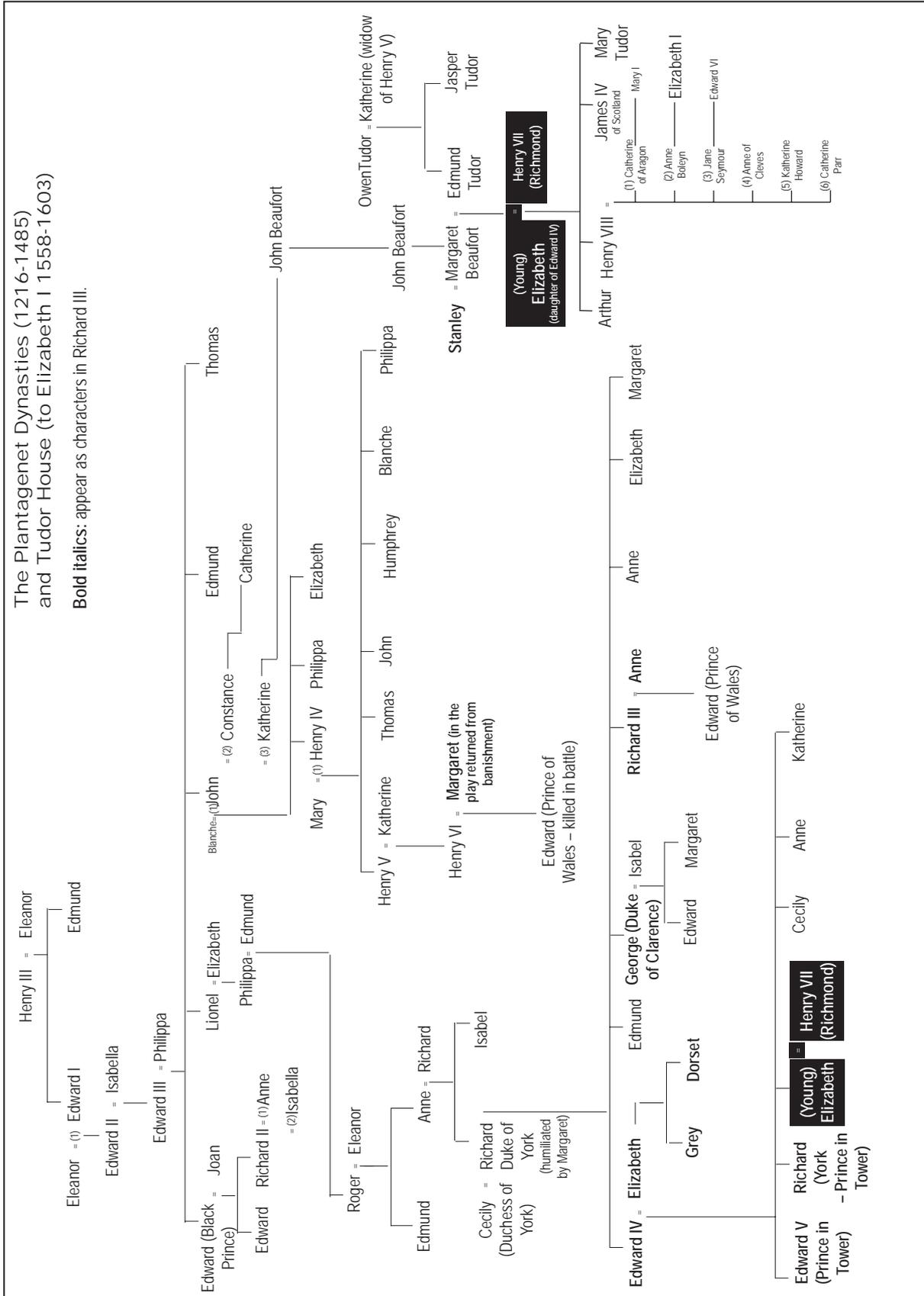
#### **Cautionary notes:**

Footage of visits to the Globe Theatre and Stratford-on-Avon don't illuminate much. The film stops at Richard's death.

# THE HOUSES OF YORK AND LANCASTER

The Plantagenet Dynasties (1216-1485) and Tudor House (to Elizabeth I 1558-1603)

**Italicized**: appear as characters in Richard III.



# Before reading

## Quotations and film stills

On page 8 is a selection of quotations from the play *Richard III*. On page 9 there are some stills from the 1955 film adaptation of the play starring Laurence Olivier.

- In pairs, read the quotations out loud. Use different coloured pens to highlight any similar or connected words.
- Look through the film stills and talk about your impressions of the character. What type of film or play do you think they might come from (for example, comedy, family drama, mystery)?
- Choose a quotation you particularly like and either match it to one of the stills on page 9, or draw your own illustration.

## Passing the crown – Richard II to Henry VII

*Richard III* is the last play in what has come to be known as Shakespeare's history cycle. This cycle dramatises the reigns of Richard II, Henrys IV, V and VI, Edward IV and Richard III. It tells of family conflict, war at home and abroad, contests for the kingdom and jealousies. In particular it dramatises the way in which the crown passed from one king to the next.

The cartoon strip on pages 10 and 11 summarises very simply the way in which the crown passed from Richard II to Henry VII.

- Look closely at the cartoon strip and, in pairs, write a sports-style commentary to accompany it.

## Shakespeare and history – a personal view

Many people only know about Richard III through Shakespeare's play. But was Shakespeare always historically accurate? Or did he sometimes 'tweak' history to make it more exciting dramatically, or perhaps to show Queen Elizabeth I and her family in a good light? In the account on pages 12 and 13 historian John Hughes explains his own interest in the infamous king and looks at some of the changes and additions Shakespeare made to what is recorded in history.

- Read John's account on pages 12 and 13. Underline or highlight the points you find most interesting or surprising.

John describes a painting which was altered to turn Richard into a hunchback. This is included on page 12.

- In pairs, talk about why Shakespeare and the person who altered the portrait decided to show Richard as a hunchback.
- Feed back your thoughts in class discussion. Discuss why you think people have been so ready to believe Shakespeare's fiction rather than historical accounts.

## Quotations and film stills (see page 7)

Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog,  
Though that wast-sealed in thy nativity  
The slave of nature and the son in hell



For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter  
What though I killed her husband and her father?



I am determined to prove a villain  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.  
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,  
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams



O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death.  
O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death.



For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter  
What though I killed her husband and her father?



Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so  
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven



But yet I run before my horse to market.  
Clarence still breathes, Edward still lives and reigns



I think there's never a man in Christendom  
Can lesser hide his love or hate, than he  
For by his face straight shall you know his heart



And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ  
And seem a saint when most play the devil