Richard II

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Though he is perhaps the most famous writer in history, much of Shakespeare's life remains a mystery. His father was a glove-maker, and the young Shakespeare received no more than a grammar school education. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, but left his family behind around 1590 and moved to London, where he became an actor and playwright. He was an immediate success: Shakespeare soon became the most popular playwright of the day as well as a part-owner of the Globe Theater. His theater troupe was adopted by King James as the King's Men in 1603. Shakespeare retired as a rich and prominent man to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1613, and died three years later.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Richard II takes place during two years of the life of England's King Richard II, who reigned from 1377 to 1399. Born the grandson of Edward III and a member of the Plantagenet family, Richard II inherited the throne as a child. The play begins the story of the Tudor reign, which culminated with Shakespeare's Queen Elizabeth I. *Richard II* also sets up the divide within the Plantagenet family and the War of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Richard II is the first play in the tetralogy of Shakespeare plays known as the Henriad, which also includes *Henry IV Part 1*, and *Henry IV Part 2*, and *Henry V*. Together, the plays enact the historic rise of the House of Lancaster to England's throne. *Richard II* tracks Henry Bolingbroke's defeat of King Richard II to become King Henry IV; *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2* track King Henry IV's reign, struggle to keep his throne, and eventual death; and *Henry V* follows the reign of Henry IV's son King Henry V, who is just a boy and is mentioned briefly in *Richard II* but does not appear on stage.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Tragedy of Richard II
- **When Written:** 1595
- **Where Written:** London
- **When Published:** 1597 (Quarto)
- **Literary Period:** Elizabethan England
- **Genre:** History Play
- **Setting:** England, Wales
- **Climax:** Richard relinquishes the throne and Henry is crowned King Henry IV
- **Antagonist:** Richard II / Henry Bolingbroke (later King Henry IV)

EXTRA CREDIT

Elevated Language (By the Numbers). *Richard II* is one of Shakespeare's only plays containing no prose whatsoever. The entirety of the play is made up of verse, 81 percent of which is blank, meaning non-rhyming. By contrast, the other plays in the Henriad are around 40% prose, and about 50% blank verse. Of all of Shakespeare's history plays, *Richard II* is the most rhyming. It is also the most rhyming of any Shakespeare play that is not a comedy.

Historical Sources. The primary source material for *Richard II* was a work known as *Holinshed's Chronicles*. This historical chronicle also provided source material for most of the history plays, as well as the tragedies *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Cymbeline*.

PLOT SUMMARY

Richard II begins with a dispute between Henry Bolingbroke, King Richard's cousin, and Thomas Mowbray. Both Henry and Mowbray accuse each other of treason, and Henry also accuses Mowbray of conspiring to murder the king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. The irony here, as expressed in the next scene by Henry's father, John of Gaunt, is that everyone knows that Richard himself was involved in Gloucester's murder. After Gaunt and Richard are unable to calm the men down, Henry and Mowbray agree to settle the matter with trial by combat.

Before the fight, the Duke of Gloucester's widow (the Duchess of Gloucester) tries to convince Gaunt to take action against Richard, but Gaunt refuses, since he believes his duty to the king is a religious matter. Though Mowbray and Henry Bolingbroke are both prepared to fight to the death for their honor, Richard arbitrarily decides to stop the battle. The king then banishes both men, Mowbray for life, and Henry for first ten but then only six years.

After delivering the sentencing on Mowbray and Henry, Richard decides he will go to Ireland, believing it is important that he lead the war there in person. To make money for this war, Richard leases land owned by the monarchy and imposes heavy taxes. When he receives news that John of Gaunt is on his deathbed, Richard decides to seize Gaunt's lands and

money (Henry's inheritance) as further financial support for his war in Ireland. When Richard visits Gaunt, the dying man takes the opportunity to speak honestly to the king. Gaunt curses at Richard and calls him a failure, before being taken offstage to die. Though he is advised against it, Richard still elects to seize Henry Bolingbroke's inheritance, which causes some nobles to begin turning against the king.

Meanwhile, as Richard heads off for Ireland, Henry returns in secret to England with an army to reclaim his inheritance. It soon becomes clear, though, that he is truly after the crown. Outside Berkeley Castle, Henry meets the nobles joining him on his mission to reclaim his inheritance and the throne. The Duke of York confronts them and, despite sympathizing with Henry, tries to uphold Richard's ruling. Ultimately, however, the Duke of York is powerless to stop Henry's large army, so he ends up conceding without any battle.

As Henry continues gathering power, it becomes clear that Richard has all but lost before even returning to England. When Richard does return, he still believes that since he is the ruler by divine right, God will protect him against Henry's usurpation. But when he learns that his supporters have dispersed, been executed, or joined Henry, Richard realizes that his throne is truly in jeopardy. He then decides to break up his army and retreats to Flint Castle. There he is confronted by Henry and his followers, and, without many options, Richard consents to return Henry's inheritance, lift his exile, and return with him to London.

Back in London, it becomes apparent that Richard will soon be deposed. Henry continues investigating Gloucester's murder, and the Duke of York tells him that Richard is going to give up the crown. As Henry begins to become king, the bishop of Carlisle calls him a traitor and prophesizes a civil war (which will be the War of the Roses). Henry then has Carlisle arrested and Richard summoned. Once in front of Henry, Richard formally relinquishes his throne and **crown**, and Henry Bolingbroke becomes King Henry IV. Richard is taken off to a tower, and a plot against Henry is revealed to Aumerle, the son of the Duke of York.

Later, the Duke of York is sympathetic towards Richard, but he continues to support Henry. He then learns that Aumerle is involved with the plot against Henry, and he decides to tell the new king about this plot and beg for mercy for his son. Before the Duke of York can arrive, Aumerle begs king Henry for a pardon, though he won't say what the crime is. Soon, though, the Duke of York arrives and explains that the crime is a plot to assassinate Henry. After much begging, Henry grants mercy to Aumerle but orders the other conspirators be captured.

As Henry exits, Exton and servants enter, and Exton reflects that Henry wants someone to take care of Richard. Exton decides to take matters into his own hand and leaves to kill the former king. Alone, Richard reflects on his fall from power, and soon the murderers enter. Though Richard kills some of Exton's men in the struggle, Exton eventually kills Richard as planned.

Henry learns first that his orders to arrest the conspirators have been followed: the men are captured and punished. In the wake of this news, the bishop of Carlisle, despite speaking so strongly against the king, is pardoned, because Henry sees sparks of honor in him. Finally, Exton enters with Richard's body, and Henry denies any involvement with or desire for this murder. To rid himself of any guilt, Henry says that he will start a crusade to the Holy Land that will "wash this **blood** off from [his] guilty hand."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

King Richard II – Richard II is the king of England at the start of the play. He inherited his **crown** from Edward III, his grandfather, and he is John of Gaunt's nephew and Henry Bolingbroke's cousin. In one sense, the play can be seen as the story of Richard's downfall. Throughout the play, Richard seems to abuse his power, and he rarely listens to advice from friends or advisors. He heavily taxes the country and spends frivolously, apparently spending more in peace times than other kings might during war. As Richard sees it, a king's power to rule comes by divine right, and he constantly tells himself that he will not lose his crown since God is on his side. Ultimately, though, Richard's focus on being king and the symbolism and divine aspects to the throne are outweighed by the need for a king to act and be successful, and Richard is deposed after a series of bad decisions.

Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV – While *Richard II* is the story of Richard's downfall, it is also the story of Henry Bolingbroke's rise to the throne as Henry IV. Henry is Richard's cousin, and the son of John of Gaunt. From the very start of the play, Henry makes it clear that he is willing to die for his honor. As opposed to Richard, who is an eloquent speaker, Henry is a man of action, and throughout the play he suggests that subjects have the power to make demands on their rulers if the rulers are not properly serving the people and the nation. Henry is extremely popular with the common people, and his transition into power goes very smoothly (though the effects of usurping the king will bedevil his own reign later on, as captured in *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2*). Once **crowned**, Henry shows mercy, pardoning a few men who stood against him because of their honor, but he also hints to a servant that Richard should be executed. We also learn briefly in this play that Henry is disappointed with his eldest son, Hal; this father/son relationship will be further explored in *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2*.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster – John of Gaunt is Richard's uncle and Henry's father. Like Richard II, he firmly believes in the divine right of kings, and he at first refuses to confront

Richard for Gloucester's murder (or any other matter) on religious grounds (since going against Richard would mean going against God, which is blasphemous). Gaunt cares deeply for his son, as upon Henry's banishment Gaunt becomes deathly ill. On his deathbed, he speaks openly and honestly with Richard, criticizing the king for leasing out royal lands and deciding that Richard is no longer above the law as king. Gaunt dies very early on in the play, allowing Richard to seize his lands and disinherit Henry Bolingbroke.

Edmund of Langley, Duke of York – The Duke of York is Gaunt's brother and Richard's uncle. Like Gaunt, the Duke of York is loyal to Richard, even though he sympathizes with Henry and urges the king not to disinherit him. When Richard leaves for Ireland, he leaves the Duke of York in charge of England, but York, after scolding Henry for breaking the king's mandate of exile, surrenders almost immediately to Henry's forces and ultimately joins with the usurper.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Duke of Aumerle – Aumerle is the son of the Duke of York. Towards the end of the play, he joins an attempt to kill Henry, but the plot is discovered and Aumerle begs for and is ultimately granted forgiveness.

Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk – Thomas Mowbray stands accused of treason by Henry at the beginning of the play. He dies while banished from England by Richard.

Duke of Surrey – An English nobleman.

Earl of Salisbury – An English nobleman loyal to Richard and ultimately executed by Henry and his men.

Lord Berkeley – An English nobleman.

John Bushy – A friend of Richard II who is ultimately executed by Henry and his men.

John Bagot – A friend of Richard who goes to Ireland to warn the king of Henry's return to England.

Henry Green – A friend of Richard who is ultimately executed by Henry and his men.

Earl of Northumberland – An English nobleman who quickly sides with Henry, having been dissatisfied with Richard's reign prior to Henry's return to England.

Henry Percy / Hotspur – The son of the Earl of Northumberland. Percy joins the rebellion, and he will ultimately be the nemesis of Henry IV's son in later plays.

Lord Ross – An English nobleman who joins forces with Henry.

Lord Willoughby – An English nobleman who sides with Henry.

Lord Fitzwater – An English nobleman.

Bishop of Carlisle – A Bishop who is loyal to Richard and unafraid to speak his mind to Henry. Carlisle is ultimately pardoned for showing "sparks of honor."

Abbot of Westminster – An abbot who believes Henry's claim to the throne is illegitimate and plots an attempt to kill the new king.

Lord Marshal – An officer in the English court.

First Herald – A herald.

Second Herald – Another herald.

Sir Stephen Scroop – A supporter of Richard.

Sir Pierce of Exton – A supporter of Henry who believes he has been instructed to kill Richard, and does so.

Captain of a Band of Welshmen – A Welsh captain.

Queen to King Richard – Richard's Queen is ultimately exiled after his death.

Queen's Ladies-in-Waiting – Servants and friends of Richard's Queen.

Duchess of York – The wife of the Duke of York and Aumerle's mother; she begs Henry to forgive her son after the assassination plot is revealed.

Duchess of Gloucester – The widow of the Duke of Gloucester, the Duchess of Gloucester tries to convince John of Gaunt to stand up to Richard at the beginning of the play.

Duke of Gloucester – He does not appear in the play. The Duke of Gloucester is another son of Edward III; Richard was involved with his murder.

Edward III – He does not appear in the play. Edward III is Richard's grandfather and the previous king of England.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

THE THRONE

Richard II is the first play in a tetralogy (a group of four plays) commonly referred to as the "Henriad." This set of plays depicts the historic struggles for the English throne, and, along with Shakespeare's other tetralogy, the changes of power that eventually led to the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, the monarch of England during the first part of Shakespeare's career. In this way, the history plays can be seen as homages to Queen Elizabeth and assertions of her right to the **crown**. But at the same time, the plays challenge the notion of monarchy and ask difficult questions, such as who has the right to rule, what are the powers of a monarch, how are those powers best enforced, and what is the relationship between a monarch and his or her country?

Richard II is no different. The play begins with Richard firmly in power presiding over a disagreement between Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, who both praise their king as a legitimate sovereign and liege. Richard's power and status of king come from his "sacred **blood**." The sacred aspect of his blood is meant literally here—this line of thinking suggests that kings rule by divine right, meaning that they are chosen and supported by God. John of Gaunt expresses this with some frustration while discussing the murder of the Duke of Gloucester, which he (and Shakespeare's audience) knows Richard was involved with. Gaunt cannot take this issue up with his king, however, and deems it God's issue to resolve, since Richard is "God's substitute" on earth. Thus any rebellion against a king is also a blasphemy and rebellion against God, and though Gaunt might disagree with Richard, he believes it against his Christian duty to challenge the king.

The reference to "sacred blood" also indicates the way that Richard receives God's endorsement for the throne: royalty and divine right are inherited. Richard was crowned king when his grandfather, Edward III, died. It is literally his blood and his family line that place him on the throne. Though there are disputes throughout the history plays about the ways to properly trace inheritance and royal bloodlines, it is generally accepted that the children of kings inherit the throne. However, when John of Gaunt dies, Richard seizes his assets and disinherits Henry Bolingbroke, robbing him of his inheritance in order to fund a war with Ireland. Such a reckless maneuver has two effects. First, it violates the practices of common decency and tradition that provide the backbone of nobility in England, alienating most people close to Richard. Many speak out against him, like the Duke of York, who will ultimately side with Henry, and others privately disagree and turn towards the rebellion based, in part, on Richard's decision to forcibly disinherit Henry. And secondly, by usurping Henry's inheritance, Richard at once delegitimizes the means in which he inherited the throne and lays the groundwork for Henry to usurp that royal inheritance and take power.

The other major question *Richard II* asks regarding the throne is how should and how does a king rule? King Richard utilizes language to enact his laws and his power, and he does so arbitrarily. When Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray are prepared to fight, for example, Richard decides at the last minute to stop the battle and arbitrarily sentences the two men to different lengths of exile. As evidenced by his willingness to fight and his decision to sneak back into England with troops to take his inheritance (and eventually the crown), Henry Bolingbroke (later King Henry IV) seems to favor action over words as a method of ruling. Richard, on the other hand, seems more concerned with his status and appearance as king than with the actual duties or responsibility of being king. He is criticized, for example, for spending more money in peace than his predecessors did during times of war.

As Henry moves to take his inheritance and fight his exile, he constantly puts forth the question of whether worldly men have the power to dethrone a king appointed by God. Another way of asking this question is "what subject can give sentence on his king?" Richard and some of his subjects (including Gaunt, Henry's father) believe the answer is no, subjects cannot pass sentence on a king or take the throne just because they are dissatisfied with the monarch's rule. But Henry and his followers suggest that a king can be held accountable for how he acts on the throne. They can make demands on the monarch if the ruler does not lead well, and can even suggest that the king has somehow lost his divine right to rule. Such a difference in belief suggests the move towards modernity, as Richard's emphasis on divine infallibility of kings is more medieval, while Henry's emphasis on intelligence, ability, and public support make him a more modern (for Shakespeare) ruler. It is significant, however, to note that Richard must ultimately surrender his crown and give power to Henry. Henry can declare himself king, but he wants it to be legitimized with Richard's willing surrender of the throne. In later plays, moves for the throne will be much more war-centric as opposed to this threat of war and simple surrender of power.

LANGUAGE

As in every Shakespeare play, language is explored and used playfully in *Richard II*. In this play, language can be seen as a source and means of power, as a connection to native lands, and as an act in and of itself. But *Richard II* is unique in that it is only one of two (or four, depending on whom you ask) plays that consist entirely of verse. While the next plays in the sequence, *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2*, feature almost 40% prose and 60% verse, and explore the relationship of informal pub-speech to formal king-speech, *Richard II* contains no prose whatsoever. The language is all elevated. Instead, characters' differences in speech come mostly from style and subject matter. King Richard II, for example, uses symbolism and metaphors, whereas Henry speaks more directly.

Speech in this play, especially from the mouth of rulers, is power. Richard decrees laws and binding decisions simply by speaking them; whatever he says is done. Henry expresses the power of Richard's speech when contemplating his own banishment, and then the reduction of his years in exile from ten to six. He notes that four years of his life are made different by one word from Richard; he says, "Such is the breath of kings." The king's speech instantaneously becomes law backed by the power of God. One word has the power to disrupt, end, or change Henry's life forever. Richard banishes Henry just by speaking, making his words a political speech-act. Another example of a speech act is the coronation of Henry as King Henry IV, which is done with speech, and legitimized by Richard's verbal concession of the throne. We can also note

that language here is described as the "breath of kings," suggesting that language provides Richard with life and is necessary for him to continue ruling.

The play, though, also explores the limitations of royal speech acts. When Richard banishes Henry, Henry's father Gaunt tells the king that the banishment will cause him to die sooner, and that he will certainly die before the exile is finished. When Richard tries to tell Gaunt that he has many years to live, Gaunt explains the limitations of royal speech. While Richard can kill him with a word, the king cannot do anything to prolong Gaunt's life: "Thy word is current with [time] for my death, / But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my breath." Though Richard is ruler by divine right and even God's substitute in England, and though he has the power to sentence Gaunt to death or seize all of his assets (as he does later in the play) just with his words, human language, even of a king, is ultimately insufficient to create or sustain life, a clear distinction between human voice and the divine.

Richard's banishment of Mowbray and Henry Bolingbroke also exposes a way that language works in the play: it connects speakers to their homeland. Upon learning that he has been banished from England for life, for example, Mowbray laments "The language I have learnt these forty years, / My native English, now I must forgo; / And now my tongue's use is to me no more / Than an unstringéd viol or a harp." After learning he has been banished, his first remark is that he will no longer be able to speak his native language, rendering his tongue as useless as a broken or incomplete instrument. Language is of the utmost importance, but particularly native English is the means of connecting with his homeland. Indeed, Mowbray concludes this speech by asking "What is thy sentence then but a speechless death, / Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath." First we can note that Richard's political sentencing was delivered simply in the form of sentences, and again that speech is made equivalent with breath. But here we see the consequences of being forced to speak another language in a different land: "speechless death." Speaking the English language, then, is a life force, and is somehow different and more significant than simply speaking or communicating in a different form.

FAMILY

At the center of *Richard II*, as in many other Shakespeare plays, is a family drama. Many characters are related to one another, and family obligations are constantly pitted against religious and moral duties. However, as is also common in Shakespeare, the family drama is elevated to a royal family drama, raising the stakes of the "domestic" conflict. One's obligation to King Richard can be doubled, for example, if one is both a subject and a cousin to the king. These raised stakes lead to political motivations, which in turn cause people to act towards their families in ways they otherwise might not. Henry's accusation of Mowbray at the beginning of the play, for example, is centered on the murder of Henry's uncle (and Gaunt's brother) the Duke of Gloucester. The irony here (exposed explicitly in the following scene) is that Richard himself is known to have been involved with Gloucester's murder, despite the fact that Gloucester was his uncle. (We can note, however, that Richard also seems swayed by family ties, as he gives Henry a lighter sentence than Mowbray for no apparent reason other than the fact that the two are cousins.)

Gloucester's murder looms over the play, and it's the knowledge of Richard's involvement that prompts the Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke's widow, to plead with Gaunt to act against Richard. In order to appeal to him, she appeals to the obligations of brotherhood, saying that it should spur him to action. Gloucester, like Gaunt himself, carried Edward III's sacred **blood**, and the Duchess says that the blood of a brother spilled is equivalent to Gaunt's own blood being spilled. They shared the same blood and a birth from the same mother, and so they also share a death. The Duchess means this figuratively, but also literally, as she believes that by not resisting Gloucester's killer, Gaunt opens himself to assassination. And though Gaunt feels this strong obligation to answer the call of brotherhood, for him the obligations of honor and of religion are stronger. Thus, though he suspects Richard of murdering his brother, he will not challenge the king for fear of challenging and blaspheming God.

Within *Richard II* we can also note a preview of the family relationship that will be central to *Henry IV 1* and *2*: the relationship between fathers and sons. In the first act, Henry laments that he might appear upset in his father's sight, which would be a great dishonor. Henry has the full support of Gaunt and the utmost desire to impress and honor him. Likewise, Gaunt says that the banishment of Henry destroyed his life (even though we should note that he encouraged the banishment so as to appear impartial, again putting religious / royal duty above his family commitment). And, indeed, Gaunt will become deathly ill, criticize Richard for murdering his grandfather's son (i.e. his uncle Gloucester), and die almost immediately after Henry's banishment. The stress on this father-son relationship foreshadows that of Henry IV with his own son, Prince Hal, the prodigal miscreant who in later plays will ultimately become King Henry V.

HONOR AND APPEARANCE

From the beginning of *Richard II*, honor—and particularly the appearance of honor—is of the utmost importance to the characters in the play. The dispute between Henry and Mowbray that opens the play, for example, is essentially one of honor. In the dispute, Henry and Mowbray stand before Richard and call each other traitors. Being a traitor is, of course, extremely dishonorable, and it is

this attack on honor and his "spotless reputation" that makes Henry's accusations so infuriating to Mowbray. Indeed, Mowbray makes explicit how important his honor is to him: "My honor is my life, both grow in one, / Take honor from me, and my life is done." Honor, then, is a matter of life and death, and both men here are willing to die for their honor and fight to the death to settle the dispute.

Honor is given such value for its relationship to nobility and the chivalric code. The identities of the major characters in the play are all tied to the sense that honor in and of itself is meaningful and important (a notion that Shakespeare will question in *Henry IV 1* through the figure of Falstaff). But having honor also seems to have tangible benefits in *Richard II*. In his angry tirade against the king, Gaunt concludes by saying, "Love they to live that love and honor have," suggesting that honor is key to a good life. By implication of the rest of the speech, he here suggests that Richard is dishonorable and so will not love to live (or live very long). While Gaunt's assertion that honor has direct benefits is slightly abstract, his son Henry provides a more concrete example once he has been crowned king. As the play comes to an end, with Richard deposed and those conspiring against Henry killed, Henry chooses to pardon Carlisle seemingly out of nowhere. The new king's reason: "For, though mine enemy thou hast ever been, / High sparks of honor in thee I have seen." Even sparks of honor are enough to grant the enemy of a king a pardon. In cases of disagreement, then, a mutual sense of honor can create a mutual sense of respect.

At the same time, the play complicates the notion of honor by suggesting at times that *appearing* honorable is just as (if not more) important than actually being honorable. Such a complication arises when we consider that the play does not always explicitly say who is honorable or who is not, nor does it lay specific instructions on how to interpret honor. The very first dispute between Henry and Mowbray, for example, is left unresolved. A debate using only language is insufficient to determine who is honorable and who is a traitor, and Richard postpones the fight to the death that would have rendered a legal decision. It's possible that the fate of each character is an indication of their level of honor, as Henry becomes king and Mowbray dies, but we don't have any indication that good or honorable characters necessarily reap better fates.

But another possible solution to this problem is that honor is just a matter of appearance, and that putting on the façade and appearance of honor is equivalent to (or better than) truly being honorable. In this interpretation, then, the characters are not obsessed with being honorable, but rather with seeming honorable, which aligns with Mowbray's complaint that his reputation is tarnished by Henry's accusation. Such an interpretation calls to mind the common Shakespearean trope of appearance vs. reality, which is also explored during the play. Richard, for example, after relinquishing his throne, says that his grief "lies all within," and that all of the "external" expressions of this grief are just "shadows" to the internal, where the true substance is. While some characters might not make this distinction between internal and external, this understanding of the self and of the tension between appearance and reality complicates the play's exploration of honor. This nuanced understanding of selfhood and honor might enable characters to better protect themselves and evaluate who is truly honorable and who is merely pretending. Indeed, we can note that Carlisle is pardoned, despite being an enemy of Henry, for the sparks of honor that the new king sees in him, indicating that Carlisle is truly honorable as opposed to only appearing it, because his honor is internal and therefore legitimate.

ENGLAND

As noted above, the Henriad and all of the history plays trace the line of the English throne leading up to Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled during the first part of Shakespeare's career. Thus, running through all of the other themes in the play are a strong sense of English pride and an exploration of England itself. The pride for England, for example, is expressed in the way that Henry and Mowbray react to being banished. Both men clearly are unhappy about leaving their country. Even speaking another language is figured as "speechless death." These Englishmen want only to speak the English language and live on English soil, indicating both a sense of pride and of English superiority. We can note also that of the all the plays in Henriad, this play is the least concerned with other nations, either through foreign visitors or the conquests of kings. Richard makes a brief journey to Ireland, but no scenes take place there, and it is in this time away from England that Henry takes action and Richard essentially loses his **crown**.

England is described with figurative language throughout the play, including being portrayed as a garden, as mother, as a nurse, and, of course, as another body of the king in the form of the body politic. These descriptors seem to indicate that the country is maternal, natural, life-giving, and beautiful. However, in a rousing speech near his death, Gaunt at once praises England and laments its current status under the rule of King Richard. In the beginning of the speech, he simply lists epithets that indicate how special England is. The country is described as the throne of kings; it is perfect and likened to an "other Eden"; it is also a "fortress built by nature herself," as it is surrounded by water and so protected from invasion, leading to the Gaunt's metaphor calling the country a "precious stone set in the silver sea." Gaunt also emphasizes England's reputation, saying that England is known throughout the world. Such a line, along with the list of praises above, can be seen as both Shakespeare pandering to his English audience and the author expressing true passion for his homeland and the deep connection and appreciation for England experienced by his

characters and the British nobility.

But under Richard, Gaunt says, England is likened to a tenement, or a land leased out by a landlord. The country that usually wants to conquer others has conquered itself. This important criticism shows a turn in Gaunt, who at first would not criticize his king for fear of breaking his Christian duty. But the harm to England and its reputation that Gaunt attributes to Richard seems to be the only thing capable of causing Gaunt to act and speak out. Gaunt calls Richard the landlord of England, not the king, and says that, as Henry suggests later, the king must be held accountable for his actions and treated as a subject of the law. Thus we see the notion that a monarch's power and infallibility come second only to the prosperity of England itself, which is figured as "the womb of royal kings." Kings and queens might replace one another, but the constant is England, which gives rulers their power and apparently must always thrive, despite the individual goals, failings, or desires of its monarchs.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

BLOOD

In *Richard II*, blood symbolizes family and lineage, royalty and the divine right of kings, honor and obligation, violence and guilt, and humanity itself. One of the earliest mentions of blood refers to king Richard's "sacred blood," a phrase which carries two spheres of meaning. Firstly, Richard has come to power because of his royal bloodline; he inherited the throne because of his blood and family lineage. But sacred blood also expresses the special character of a king's blood: it is (supposedly) divine. Thus blood also comes to represent the divine right of kings in the play. Sharing blood with someone, especially divine blood, creates a strong and complicated relationship. This relationship is explored when the Duchess of Gloucester appeals to Gaunt's sense of family honor, saying that an attack on the Duke of Gloucester, Gaunt's brother, is an attack on his blood and therefore an attack on Gaunt himself, thus obligating the living brother to act. But since Gaunt is also related to Richard and recognizes the royal aspect of Richard's blood, he is unable (at first) to say or do anything.

Though there is not much violence in the play, blood is often evoked in threats of violence or moments where violence might potential break out, and blood is also used to symbolize guilt, as Henry ends the play hoping to wash any blood from his hands with a crusade to Jerusalem. Finally, blood also represents humanity, as Richard, in a moment of weakness when he fears he'll lose his seat on the throne, says that he is only "flesh and blood."

THE CROWN

The crown is a symbol of the throne, the king, and the powers of the king. When Henry gathers troops to support him, for example, Richard says that they are lifting steel against the crown, which represents the king himself and his claim to England. Most simply, the crown indicates who is king, and in the climax of the play, Richard physically hands the crown to Henry, both symbolizing and enacting the change in power. But there is also some complexity to the symbol, as Richard refers to the crown as "hollow," which is both literal, since the crown has an empty space for the wearer's head, and figurative, since it can suggest that the monarchy itself or the head within the crown are hollow or unsubstantial. What's more, the crown is also tied to identity, especially since Richard's identity is so tied up with the kingship. He says in the process of being deposed, "my crown I am." On one hand, this suggests that his entire identity is that of a king, and that once he loses his crown he soon dies. But we can also note that this line may be a pun relying on the other meaning of the word "crown": a head.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Simon & Schuster edition of *Richard II* published in 2005.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

What I speak
My body shall make good upon this earth
Or my divine soul answer it in heaven.
Thou art a traitor and a miscreant.

Related Characters: Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV (speaker), King Richard II, Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.1.37-40

Explanation and Analysis

These are among Henry Bolingbroke's first lines of the play. They are spoken in front of King Richard II, and they precede Henry's formal accusation of Thomas Mowbray, whom Henry believes is a traitor and a murderer. Here, Henry stresses that what he says with language, he will make true with action (with his body). If he is wrong, he says,

then he will suffer the consequences of divine judgment. The dispute is essentially one of honor, and both Henry and Mowbray are willing to fight and die to prove themselves honorable. We can note that for Henry, who is not a king, speech in and of itself is not an action or all-powerful. Henry's speech as a citizen must be reinforced by actions.

> Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled by me.
> Let's purge this choler without letting blood.
> This we prescribe, though no physician.
> Deep malice makes too deep incision.
> Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed,
> Our doctors say this is no month to bleed.—
> Good uncle, let this end where it begun;
> We'll calm the Duke of Norfolk, you your son.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.1.156-163

Explanation and Analysis

After Henry and Mowbray have made their accusations, argued, and offered to fight one another, King Richard intercedes in an attempt to placate both men and resolve the matter without violence. He tells them to "be ruled by [him]," emphasizing that at this point his position on the throne is still secure. He hopes to end the situation without blood being spilled. The symbol of blood is used most basically here with a literal meaning; violence causes blood to spill.

But Richard also evokes bloodletting, an early medicinal practice of letting someone bleed in order to heal them. Richard, we see, rules with language, and favors figurative imagery to make his points. We can also note the sage advice in "deep malice makes too deep incision," which suggests that hatred often plunges too deep. Richard advises the men to forgive and forget the matter, and if they had listened to him, Richard's downfall might have been prevented.

> The purest treasure mortal times afford
> Is spotless reputation; that away,
> Men are but gilded loam or painted clay.
> A jewel in a ten-times-barred-up chest
> Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.
> Mine honor is my life; both grow in one.
> Take honor from me, and my life is done.

Related Characters: Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk (speaker), King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.1.183-189

Explanation and Analysis

Mowbray offers these lines in what is basically a refusal to do as Richard suggested and let the matter go. He says that he must fight Henry's accusation, because otherwise he'll lose honor and hurt his reputation. A good reputation, he says, is the most important thing to human beings. Without a reputation, even a good man is just good because he is painted or "gilded," suggesting that reputation is about more than just *appearing* honorable; instead, reputation is something internal.

Mowbray emphasizes the importance of honor when he goes on to say that his honor is his life. He suggests that if his honor is taken away from him, he will literally die. This dramatic assertion could just be an example of Mowbray using dramatic and elevated language to make his case—and indeed, we can notice that these lines all rhyme—but soon after being banished, Mowbray will in fact die, forcing us to question if honor really is required for him to stay alive.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

> Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?
> Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?
> Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
> Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
> Or seven fair branches springing from one root.
> ...
> Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine! That bed, that womb,
> That metal, that self mold that fashioned thee
> Made him a man; and though thou livest and breathest,
> Yet art thou slain in him.

Related Characters: Duchess of Gloucester (speaker), Duke of Gloucester, King Richard II, Edward III, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.1.9-26

Explanation and Analysis

The Duchess of Gloucester delivers these lines to her brother-in-law, John of Gaunt, in order to convince him to act against Richard. Gaunt has expressed his frustration at wanting to act against Richard for killing his brother Gloucester, but also feeling a religious obligation not to speak out against Richard since he is king.

The Duchess of Gloucester tries to use vivid imagery to convince Gaunt that his familial obligation is greater than his obligation to a king. She says that all of Gaunt's brothers are like seven vials of Edward III's sacred blood. Here blood symbolizes both familial bonds and the royal lineage. Gaunt and Gloucester shared the same blood. What's more, the Duchess argues, they shared the same bed and womb, and were formed by the very same parents. And though Gaunt is alive, she says, he has also been killed through the death of Gloucester.

This final point has a dual meaning. First, as Gaunt and Gloucester share the same blood (and all of the other imagery) they are presented as essentially the same. Gaunt loses a bit of his own blood and dies when his family members die. But the Duchess also suggests that by refusing to speak against his brother's killer, Gaunt dangerously opens himself up to attack.

Act 1, Scene 3 Quotes

The language I have learnt these forty years,
My native English, now I must forgo;
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringéd viol or a harp,
Or like a cunning instrument cased up,
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony.
…
What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?

Related Characters: Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk (speaker), King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.3.161-175

Explanation and Analysis

Mowbray delivers these lines after his near battle with Henry. As the two are about to fight, Richard interjects and decides instead to banish both men. Here, Mowbray reacts to the pain of being banished from England.

His primary complaint about banishment is that he will no longer be able to speak his first language. He has spoken and learned his native English for forty years, and now, since he must live in a different country, he will not be able to speak it, rendering his tongue (with a pun on tongue meaning language) as useless as a broken musical instrument, or, he says, an instrument in unskilled hands.

What's more, Mowbray characterizes this sentence as "speechless death," suggesting that going without speaking English (like being robbed of his honor) will lead to his death. Speech then, is given the utmost importance. Speaking is (repeatedly) characterized as breathing; it is an essential component of staying alive. But Shakespeare also emphasizes and elevates his own English language in particular, rather than just praising language itself.

How long a time lies in one little word!
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
End in a word; such is the breath of kings.

Related Characters: Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV (speaker), King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.3.218-220

Explanation and Analysis

Henry speaks these lines after Richard banishes him for ten years and then reduces his sentence to six years. Like Mowbray's response, the lines indicate the power and importance of language in the play. However, rather than saying that language is important to Henry, who is more action oriented than speech oriented, these lines refer to the specific power of a king's speech, which can be understood as a speech act.

Again characterizing speech as breath, Henry notes that one word from Richard's mouth can change the course of his life. By uttering one sentence, Richard takes four long years off of Henry's banishment. Richard's speech can be understood as an act because when a king speaks a

(punitive) sentence, it is immediately law. Just saying the words "you are banished for six years" enacts the banishment.

Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow,
And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow.
Thou canst help time to furrow me with age,
But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage,
Thy word is current with him for my death,
But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my breath.

Related Characters: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV, King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.3.233-238

Explanation and Analysis

Gaunt speaks these lines in anguish after his son's sentencing. He says that he only supported the idea of banishing Henry to appear impartial, and that he (Gaunt) will most likely die before Henry returns to England. Richard attempts to comfort Gaunt and tell him that he's mistaken, but here Gaunt makes an important distinction about the limitations of a king's speech.

Richard's speech has the power of action; with one word he could sentence Gaunt to death, basically killing him with words. But Gaunt notes that Richard is powerless to grant him life, to undo or slow time. Like time, Richard can use his word to kill Gaunt, but once Gaunt is dead, no royal words, nor the entire kingdom of England can be used to bring him back to death. This power to give life is one reserved only for God, an important limitation to the speech powers of a king who is understood as God's substitute on earth.

Act 2, Scene 1 Quotes

This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
...
England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,
...
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out—I die pronouncing it—
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.

Related Characters: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (speaker), King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.1.45-66

Explanation and Analysis

Gaunt speaks this lengthy, powerful monologue on his deathbed, moments before Richard enters. In it, he gives a grand list of epithets for England, employing the literary device anaphora, which means a series of lines beginning with a repeated word or phrase (in this case the repeated word is "this").

England itself is characterized as a throne, a beautiful, royal island, a majestic place, and a second garden of Eden. Gaunt also speaks to the natural defenses of England, which is guarded by water on all sides like a "precious stone set in the silver sea," an image of both nature and of jewelry making. This double image is fitting, since Gaunt characterizes Nature as the builder of the fortress that is England.

He continues, transitioning to family imagery, characterizing England as a "nurse" and a "teeming womb of royal kings." England, which we can note is emphasized on a line by itself in the middle of this long speech, is a maternal nurse figure for Gaunt. It is extremely important to him, evidenced by his four-time repetition of the word "dear." With his dying breath, Gaunt wants to proclaim that the country that he loves and has just described in all of its majesty is now merely leased out like a farm. The leasing he refers to with obvious disappointment is Richard's decision to lease out royal lands in order to fund the war with Ireland.

Act 2, Scene 2 Quotes

O, but they say the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony.
Where words are since, they are seldom spent in vain,
For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.
He that no more must say is listened more
Than they whom youth and ease have taught to gloze.

Related Characters: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (speaker), Edmund of Langley, Duke of York, King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.1.5-13

Explanation and Analysis

Gaunt speaks these lines while deathly ill after his son's banishment. He says them to his brother York, after saying that he hopes to see Richard again before he dies to give him some final advice. The reason Gaunt believes this last meeting to be important is that "the tongues of dying men" (i.e. speeches from people who are about to die) carry more weight than those of regular, healthy people. Gaunt suggests that last words are rarely unimportant or spent in vain, and that they are most often important truths. Someone uttering their last speech, according to Gaunt, will be listened to more carefully than a young smooth talker ("someone taught to gloze"). Ultimately, though, Gaunt's illness is used as the reason for Richard to ignore Gaunt's dying speech.

Act 3, Scene 2 Quotes

That power that made you king
Hath power to keep you king in spite of all.

Related Characters: Bishop of Carlisle (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV, King Richard II

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.2.27-28

Explanation and Analysis

Carlisle speaks these lines after Richard delivers a speech addressed to the land of England itself, urging it to fight against Henry. Carlisle says this quote to remind Richard of the supposed source of his power as king: God. Here he suggests that the power that made Richard king (i.e. God, since Richard rules by divine right) has the power to keep Richard king no matter what the odds against him (since God is omnipotent). Carlisle's reasoning reflects Richard's own belief in the source of his status as monarch, as well as the thinking of many in the play, including Gaunt (at first) and York, but the notion that God will keep Richard king ultimately falls flat and fails to keep Richard's confidence up for long. We can also note that Carlisle here gives the more medieval, opposite perspective of Henry (and his supporters), who would argue the more modern notion that subjects can hold their king accountable for his actions on the throne.

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.
For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for His Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Duke of Aumerle, Bishop of Carlisle, Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 3.2.55-62

Explanation and Analysis

Richard speaks these lines in self-reassurance after being reminded by Carlisle (and Aumerle) that he is king by divine right. Despite the fact that his chances against Henry look bad, they say, God is on his side. Employing his heavily figurative language, Richard says that not all of the water in the sea can wash away his kingliness, nor can all the breath (speech) of every human depose a king who has been chosen by God. Humans and nature, he argues, simply do not have the power to dethrone God's appointed substitute. For every soldier that Henry has gathered to fight against the crown (representing the throne and position of king), Richard says that God has an angel who will fight on his side.

AUMERLE
Comfort, my liege. Why looks your Grace so pale?

KING RICHARD
But now the blood of twenty thousand men
Did triumph in my face, and they are fled;
And till so much blood thither come again
Have I not reason to look pale and dead?

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Duke of Aumerle

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 3.2.76-81

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are the first in one of many of Richard's dramatic shifts of emotional state. In this scene he constantly goes from high to low, mirroring his political fall that is currently taking place. Aumerle asks Richard why his face looks so pale after finding out that the Welsh soldiers he thought were going to fight for him have dispersed. Richard responds with the excerpted lines, saying that he is pale because the blood of twenty thousand men (referring to the Welsh soldiers) once suggested that he'd triumphed, but now has fled from his face. Until so much blood (so many men) comes back to his face, of course he will look pale.

Throughout these lines, Richard plays on dual uses of blood and the notion of the body politic, in which the king's body is figured as the country itself. The soldiers (who all have blood in their bodies as humans) have fled his country, which, since he is king, is his second body. The flight of the soldiers from this second body is then mirrored in the flight of his own blood from his face, causing him to go pale at the bad news.

I had forgot myself. Am I not king?
Awake, thou coward majesty, thou sleepest!
Is not the King's name twenty thousand names?
Arm, arm, my name! A puny subject strikes
At thy great glory. Look not to the ground,
You favorites of a king. Are we not high?
High be our thoughts.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.2.84-90

Explanation and Analysis

For a moment, Richard attempts to swing his emotions back upward, saying that in his despair he forgot himself. He asks himself rhetorically, "Am I not king?" He then proceeds to call out his own majesty for being asleep, and says that his name is worth twenty thousand regular names (the number of soldiers he's just lost). He characterizes Henry as a "puny subject" compared to his own great glory, and consciously uses the imagery of low to high that has been used to characterize his fall and Henry's rise. Richard tells himself not to look at the ground, since he himself is high (though he uses the royal "we" here to emphasize his greatness). He needs to think high to keep his high political position on the throne. However, he will soon be emotionally deflated, and ultimately he will fall and lose his crown.

Act 3, Scene 3 Quotes

He is come to open
The purple testament of bleeding war;
But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation, and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 3.3.95-102

Explanation and Analysis

Richard says these lines to Henry in a proud speech. In it, he demands that his subjects treat him with the respect a king deserves, and he reminds these subjects that he is ruler by divine right. Here, he addresses Henry directly to say that he will fight to keep the throne. Richard says that Henry is causing a bloody war, and that before he can take the crown he wants in peace, ten thousand bloody crowns (heads) of mother's sons will stain the face of England, which is figured both as a maiden and as a garden. Richard plays on the two

meanings of crown here, and he returns to the image of the blood of thousands of men and the face of England. Though instead of the blood rushing from his own face as above, in Act 3 Scene 2, here the blood will be spilled and will stain the pale face of the body politic.

Act 4, Scene 1 Quotes

What subject can give sentence on his king?
And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?

Related Characters: Bishop of Carlisle (speaker), King Richard II, Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.127-128

Explanation and Analysis

Carlisle speaks these lines in protest after Henry is all but officially crowned king Henry IV. Carlisle again offers the more medieval perspective that a king rules solely by divine right, and that subjects of the king, no matter how dissatisfied with the monarch's rule, do not have the power to pass sentence on a king or depose a king. And everyone but the king, he says, is a subject. The logic of these lines is what frustrated Gaunt at the beginning of the play, and is essentially the same as Richard's logic when he said that not all the waters of the oceans could wash away his kingliness; only God or a king can dethrone or pass sentence on a king.

If you crown him, let me prophesy
The blood of English shall manure the ground
And future ages groan for this foul act,
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound.
Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny
Shall here inhabit, and this land be called
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.
O, if you raise this house against this house,
It will the woefullest division prove
That ever fell upon this curséd earth!

Related Characters: Bishop of Carlisle (speaker), King Richard II, Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.1.142-153

Explanation and Analysis

After saying that technically, Henry cannot be crowned or pass sentence on Richard, Carlisle here offers his prophesy as to what will happen if Henry somehow is crowned. He says that the blood of the English will spill onto the ground, and that future generations will despise the foul deed of crowning Henry. Other lands will find peace while England becomes home to wars, where the family fights itself and people slaughter each other. Chaos and horror, he says, will rule England, if one house (family) rises against another. Dramatically, Carlisle says that it will be the worst split to ever occur on earth. This vivid, intense prophesy, audiences would know, will ultimately come true in later plays in the extremely blood Wars of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York. We can note that part of the horror of this war is that it is a war between two sides of one family. Here the family drama is elevated to a royal scale, and to deadly effect.

Yet I well remember
The favors of these men. Were they not mine?
Did they not sometime cry "All hail" to me?
So Judas did to Christ, but He in twelve
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.175-179

Explanation and Analysis

Richard says these lines just before officially turning his crown over to Henry. He laments that all of those who used to be his subjects and used to praise him are now supporting Henry as king. Richard likens this betrayal and the frustration of their shallow loyalty to Judas's betrayal of Christ. But, as always, Richard expands the example to a kingly scale, saying that he has been betrayed by thousands, as opposed to only one (Judas) who betrayed Jesus. And what's more, Judas was only one out of twelve apostles who betrayed, whereas Richard claims that *none* of his thousands were truthful to him. This final point though, is a little over the top, as only moments before these lines are

spoken Carlisle has been arrested for treason against Henry for supporting Richard.

> Here, cousin, seize the crown.
> Here, cousin.
> On this side my hand, on that side thine.
> Now is this golden crown like a deep well
> That owes two buckets, filling one another,
> The emptier ever dancing in the air,
> The other down, unseen, and full of water.
> That bucket down and full of tears am I,
> Drinking my grief, whilst you mount up on high.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.1.190-198

Explanation and Analysis

In this climactic moment, the transition of power from Richard to Henry is made through the physical object of the crown, which symbolizes power and the throne itself. Both men hold either side of the crown, while Richard characterizes it as a deep well with two buckets alternately rising (when empty) and falling (when full of water). While Richard passes his power to Henry, he envisions Henry as a higher bucket pouring sorrows, grief, and tears down to a lower bucket that is Richard. It is fitting that as his fall is enacted and Henry's rise to power is made official, Richard uses more low and high imagery with himself occupying the lowly figure.

> With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
> With mine own hands I give away my crown,
> With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
> With mine own breath release all duteous oaths.
> All pomp and majesty I do forswear.
> My manors, rents, revenues I forgo;
> My acts, decrees, and statutes I deny.
> God pardon all oaths that are broke to me.
> God keep all vows unbroke are made to thee.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.1.216-224

Explanation and Analysis

In these powerful lines, which utilize anaphora, the literary device in which multiple lines begin with the same word or words (here, "with my own"), Richard officially transfers his powers as king over to Henry. These lines are significant because, while it seems that Henry's perspective on the ability of subjects to pass sentence on kings has won, the notion that only a king can dethrone a king is not disproven. Rather, it is reinforced, as Henry's coronation cannot be made official until Richard himself transfers the power. Thus it is crucial that Richard washes the "balm" (his anointment) with his own tears, gives the crown with his own hands, speaks the transfer with his own mouth, and makes Henry king with his own breath. It is also tragic, however, that his last speech act as king is to uncrown himself through the coronation of his foe.

> Alack the heavy day,
> That I have worn so many winters out
> And know not now what name to call myself.
> O, that I were a mockery king of snow
> Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke,
> To melt myself away in water drops.—

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.268-273

Explanation and Analysis

Richard speaks these lines as a subject, having transferred away his kingly power to Henry IV. This excerpt speaks to the loss of identity that Richard feels upon losing the throne. After so many years alive, he doesn't know what to call himself, since he has only been king thus far. After using "winters" for years, Richard uses another winter image and reverses the imagery that he has previously used to describe himself as king. Throughout the play, Richard characterizes himself as the sun, but here he wishes that he

were a fake king made of snow standing before the sun that is Henry, so that he could be melted away into water. This image at once clarifies the reversal of power roles and shows Richard's deep despair and wish to melt away into water drops, reminiscent of Hamlet's desire to "melt into dew."

They shall be satisfied. I'll read enough
When I do see the very book indeed
Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.284-286

Explanation and Analysis

Richard speaks these lines after officially transferring his powers to Henry. The last thing that Henry and his men require of Richard is a formal reading of all the accusations against the former king. They bring him a list and ask him to read the crimes. Instead, Richard requests a mirror, wherein he will look at his reflection and report the faults he sees there, which are all in himself. In one way, these lines suggest the way that Richard has internalized his faults, and the way that sin and dishonor appear to be a matter of one's interior, as opposed to matters of appearance alone. But we can also note a clever, multi-language pun. Richard says that in the mirror he'll see the book where all his sins are written, and that book is his self. This line plays with the Latin word "corpus," which means both body and book.

Act 5, Scene 3 Quotes

Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?
'Tis full three months since I did see him last.
If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.
I would to God, my lords, he might be found.
Inquire at London, 'mongst the taverns there,
For there, they say, he daily doth frequent
With unrestrainéd loose companions,
...
Yet through both
I see some sparks of better hope, which elder years
May happily bring forth.

Related Characters: Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.1.1-22

Explanation and Analysis

Henry speaks these lines to Henry Percy and some other nobles at the beginning of a scene. He has officially been crowned king by this point in the play. The excerpt is the first (and only mention) of Henry's own son during the play, which partly focused at the beginning on Henry's relationship with his father, Gaunt. Henry describes his son Hal (though unnamed here) as "unthrifty," and notes that he hasn't seen him in three months. If anything can threaten his crown, he says, right now it's this prodigal son, who can be found, most likely, at a tavern in London with wild companions that sometimes even commit robberies.

This depiction of Hal is proved exactly accurate in the following play, Henry IV Part 1, which focuses in part on the father-son relationship between Henry and Hal. It's fitting that Henry has this conversation with Percy, since in the next play Henry will even say that he wishes Percy were his son instead of Hal.

It's also fitting, though, that Henry concludes the discussion of his son by saying that he sees sparks of hope in the boy, and that he might grow up and become a son of whom he can be proud. Henry's prediction is also proved true by the rest of the tetralogy. In fact, Henry IV Part 1 and Part 2 and Henry V can even be seen as three plays telling the story of Hal's transition from miscreant prince to the successful King Henry V.

Act 5, Scene 5 Quotes

My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
My soul the father, and these two beget
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
And these same thoughts people this little world,
In humors like the people of this world,
For no thought is contented.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.5.6-11

Explanation and Analysis

Richard speaks these confusing lines while imprisoned by Henry. Part of the dramatic irony here is that Exton has

already said that he intends to murder Richard, but Richard doesn't know that he will be killed (though he does consider himself to be as good as dead). After saying that he cannot compare his prison to the world because he is so completely alone, Richard speaks the difficult excerpted lines. He says that his brain will be "female" to his soul, and that his soul will be a father, and that together brain and soul will produce self-reproducing ("still-breeding") thoughts and ideas. These thoughts will people the prison, meaning that they'll stand in for the people out in the world to end his loneliness in prison. The people in the world are then characterized as miserable, since none of his thoughts are content in his pain. This complex figurative language is an example of Richard as a contemplative, language-oriented king, contrasted starkly by direct, action-oriented Henry.

Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the King's blood stained the King's own land.
Mount, mount, my soul. Thy seat is up on high,
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.

Related Characters: King Richard II (speaker), Sir Pierce of Exton

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5.5.112-116

Explanation and Analysis

Richard speaks these lines in prison amidst an attack by Exton and a few other murderers. Richard manages to kill two would-be murderers, but Exton gains the upper hand and fatally wounds the former king. The excerpted lines are Richard's last words before death. He first tells Exton that he has stained the King's land with the King's own blood. This image shows that in his dying moments, Richard still thinks of himself as the rightful king. Exton has also stained the king's land with king's blood in two senses, since the blood most likely spilled on the literal ground, and on the figurative ground of England in the body politic, which might be considered as Richard's skin.

With his final words, though, Richard speaks only to his soul. Even though he submitted to Henry and even used the low / high image motif to place himself as the lowly bucket in the crown passing scene, here Richard seeks to embody both the low and the high. While his body and flesh (and potentially England itself) goes downward to die, completing his tragic fall from the throne, his soul is sent upward to heaven, granting him a final victory or respite in death.

Act 5, Scene 6 Quotes

They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murderer, love him murdered.
The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labor,
But neither my good word nor princely favor.
...
I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.

Related Characters: Henry Bolingbroke / King Henry IV (speaker), Sir Pierce of Exton, King Richard II

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5.6.38-42

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are exerpted from the final speech in the play, delivered by Henry, which is traditional, since often the most powerful figures receive the last word in Shakespeare's plays. Henry speaks these lines after finding out that Exton has murdered Richard. While Exton claims that he did so under order from Henry, the new king tries to make it clear that he never ordered such a killing. He says that no one loves poison that needs it, and that he doesn't love Exton. By this he means that though he desired the death of Richard, he would never order or enact it, and though Exton performed a difficult, needed service, he did so without the support of the king. Essentially, this is a paradox. Henry loves that Richard was murdered, but hates the murderer. He must take this position to ensure the legitimacy of his crown. He doesn't want to get himself into the same position that Richard was at the start of the play, where everyone knew that he was implicated in the death of Gloucester.

At the same time, though, Henry does admit some guilt, saying that he needs to make a pilgrimage or crusade to the Holy Land in order to wash the blood from his guilty hands (even though a "crusade" typically means spilling more blood). Though Henry didn't literally kill Richard, the situation is enough to put figurative blood on his hands, representing his guilt. Ultimately, though, he will not end up

making this journey in the following plays.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

The play begins with King Richard, John of Gaunt, and other nobles entering the stage. Richard asks Gaunt if he has brought his son Henry, who is making an accusation against Thomas Mowbray. Gaunt responds that he has indeed brought Henry, and so Richard asks if Gaunt has asked his son whether the accusation is legitimate or merely based on an old grudge. Gaunt says that Henry sees Mowbray as dangerous and believes he is a threat to king. The quarreling men are then called forward to discuss the accusations publicly in front of the king.

At the start of the play, Richard II is firmly in power on the English throne. We are also introduced immediately to family tensions, as Henry is Gaunt's son, and to questions of honor, as the dispute between Henry and Mowbray is the subject matter that opens the play. From the beginning, it's unclear whether these accusations are genuine, or merely attempts to appear more honorable.

Both Henry and Mowbray praise Richard before beginning to accuse one another. Henry, who is prepared to die for this cause, swears on his honor that Mowbray is a traitor. Mowbray responds by asserting his own honor and innocence, and by saying that Henry is in fact a traitor and a liar. At this Henry throws his gage (glove), a gesture that marks an official challenge. Mowbray then picks up the glove, officially accepting this challenge.

With Richard still firmly in power, part of appearing honorable is praising him. Both men swear on their honor, which is a life and death matter. Though the debate begins in the realm of language, the official gesture of throwing the gage begins to transfer it into the realm of battle, violence, and action.

Again, Henry says that he is willing to prove his truth in battle. At Richard's request, he gives more details of his accusation: Henry says that Mowbray has committed numerous treasons for eighteen years, and more specifically was involved in the murder of the Duke of Gloucester.

Henry emphasizes again that he is willing to die for his honor, and that what's true according to language can be supported or confirmed by action (battle). As will become clear in act 1 scene 2, the dramatic irony here (which Shakespeare's audience would have known) is that Richard himself was involved with Gloucester's death.

Mowbray then attempts to make his own case, noting that Richard and Henry are cousins. Richard, though, says that he is ever impartial, and vows that Henry will not receive special treatment just because he is near to the king's "sacred **blood**." Mowbray then continues to make his own case, in which he also says he is willing to undergo trial by combat to settle the matter. He says that Henry is a liar and that he didn't murder Gloucester, though he was negligent in preventing the attack. He also admits to laying an ambush for Gaunt, but says that he has already confessed and repented for this crime, and he maintains that Henry's accusations are baseless. The king and John of Gaunt try to calm Henry and Mowbray down, but the two men are too heated and too desperate to preserve their honor and reputation to back down. Richard then decrees that the two will fight a trial by combat.

Richard introduces the dual symbolism of blood, as it indicates both Henry's close familiar relationship to the king, and the royal, divine lineage of their family. Mowbray, like Henry, continues to emphasize that he will die for his honor (or to keep up the appearance of being honorable), and that he's willing to back up his verbal claims with actions. Though Gaunt and Richard attempt to use language to calm the accusers and intercede, ultimately the king decides language is insufficient to settle the debate. Instead, he decrees that the two men will do as they have offered, and settle it with a trial by combat.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

In this scene, John of Gaunt talks with his brother's widow, the Duchess of Gloucester. Gaunt laments his brother's death, and the unfortunate fact that the one who has the power to correct the situation or punish the killer (Richard) was the one involved with the murder. Facing this difficult situation, Gaunt resigns himself to let heaven resolve the quarrel.

In Gaunt's mind, honor and duty to the king outweigh familial obligation. He speaks about the absolute power of the king, and the difficulty of accusing a monarch of a crime or wrongdoing when the only one with the power to correct the wrongdoing or inflict punishment is the monarch himself.

The Duchess of Gloucester, though, encourages Gaunt to act by appealing to his sense of brotherhood. Edward III's sons, she says, including Gaunt and the Duke of Gloucester, all contained sacred **blood**. She says an attack on one is an attack on all of them; killing Gloucester is killing Gaunt, because the brothers shared the same womb, blood, bed, and upbringing, but also because by allowing Gloucester's killers to go free, Gaunt leaves himself vulnerable to attack.

The Duchess of Gloucester believes that family bonds and obligations are stronger and more important than any duty to the king, though she does seem to suggest that this family is particularly important because of its royal blood. The Duchess uses vivid, intense imagery of brothers sharing blood and a womb to strengthen her appeal to Gaunt's sense of family duty.

Despite the Duchess's intense speech, Gaunt still maintains that the quarrel must be left up to God, since Richard is king and God's substitute on earth, and going against him would therefore be blasphemy. The Duchess says she hopes that Henry is successful in the fight, thereby punishing Mowbray for her husband's murder, and as she parts, she tells Gaunt about grief and laments her status as widow.

Gaunt accepts that he has a family obligation, but since he believes Richard is king by divine right, he will not act against the throne for fear of blaspheming God himself. The Duchess appears more interested in human action creating justice than surrendering the situation to God.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

This scene begins formally in the lists, a small enclosed space for tournaments and fights like that between Mowbray and Henry. After a long ceremony in which the two men are introduced, armed, and given the opportunity to swear to the king. Each man says that if he is willing to fight to the death, and that he believes the verdict rendered by the battle will be just. Henry, for example, says that if he dies, he doesn't want anyone to mourn his loss, since his death will mean that he was a traitor. After these speeches and official proclamations, the fight is set to begin.

The ceremony here is extremely official and lengthy, possibly mocking such courtly spectacles. Within this ceremony, Richard's power is still absolute. The two men continue emphasizing that honor (or appearing honorable) is worth dying for, and both men seem confident in their causes and absolutely willing to accept the results of the trial.

Just as the fight is about to start, however, Richard arbitrarily stops it. He says that the kingdom's earth should not be stained with the **blood** that it made, and that he hates to see neighbors fight. He continues to say that this hatred between the two men might disturb the nation and its peace, which he describes as an infant in a cradle. Thus, in the name of keeping the peace, Richard decides to banish Henry for ten years and to banish Mowbray for life.

This is the first in a series of mistakes that will lead to Richard's downfall. He asserts his power as king, using speech in place of action. He also characterizes England as a mother, and then alternatively as an infant, relying heavily on metaphorical language. We can also note that the difference in banishments appears completely arbitrary, and perhaps based off of the king's familial relationship to Henry, as pointed out earlier by Mowbray.

After hearing this harsh sentence, Mowbray asks for mercy. The most disturbing part of the banishment, it seems, is that Mowbray will no longer be able to speak his native tongue: the English language. The sentence is so harsh that Mowbray deems it a "speechless death." But Richard does not relent. Instead, he makes the two men swear to follow his command, observe the exile, and never speak to each other again. The two men agree, swear, and part as enemies, as Mowbray leaves.

Mowbray's reaction to his banishment showcases both the significance of language and of English and England itself. Being prevented from speaking English is figured as a verbal, silent death. But though both men are unhappy with this outcome, they still must appear honorable and accept the king's ruling as absolute. Richard's commandment that the two men will not speak to each other reflects possible concerns about rebellion.

But just after his exit, Richard sees how sad Gaunt is to lose his son to banishment, so the king reduces Henry's exile from ten to six years. Here Henry remarks that the speech of kings is so powerful that in one word Richard has changed four years of his life. Gaunt thanks the king, but says he still believes he will be dead before Henry returns. Gaunt explains that he supported the decision to banish Henry so as to appear unbiased, but in reality he believes the decision is destroying his life. When Richard tries to reassure Gaunt, the Duke makes an important distinction about the power of a king's speech. While Richard can sentence Gaunt to death with a word or banish Henry forever, he cannot give someone life or restore life to Gaunt after he is dead.

Richard continues to appear inconstant and arbitrary by reducing Henry's sentence, again influenced by family obligation. Gaunt, we see, has continued to favor appearance and honor over family obligation, as he recommended the banishment so as to appear unbiased. Gaunt and Henry explain both the power of king's speech and its limitations; Richard can make laws by uttering them, but unlike a true God, he cannot use words to create life.

After the king's exit, Gaunt tries to comfort Henry, who is distraught that he must leave his native land. Every step away from home that he takes, he says, will be a painful one. Gaunt suggests that his son try to think of the banishment as a vacation, or pretend that it's by choice, but Henry ultimately says that merely pretending wouldn't make it any less painful. The scene ends with Henry bidding goodbye to England, which he describes as his "mother" and his "nurse."

Henry, like Mowbray, experiences the banishment as extremely painful. Despite his father's efforts to reframe the banishment as something intentional or pleasant, Henry believes that any sort of pretending or mental acrobatics cannot make his removal from England, which he also figures as a motherly nurse figure, any less painful.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

This scene takes place in Richard's court. It begins with Richard asking Aumerle about Henry's exit and if tears were shed. Richard then notes how popular Henry is with the common people. Conversation then shifts to the war in Ireland, which Richard is funding by leasing out royal lands and imposing taxes. Richard learns that Gaunt is dying, and decides that he will use this to his advantage and seize more funds for the war.

Richard's comment that Henry is popular with the people of England foreshadows Henry's eventual and popularly supported rebellion. Richard's war in Ireland, along with his seizure of Gaunt's estate, are two key mistakes that will turn even his closest allies against him and push them towards Henry.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Act 2 begins with John of Gaunt, who is sick, talking with his brother the Duke of York. Gaunt hopes the king will visit so he has the opportunity to give final advice to Richard, which he believes will be taken more seriously since it is coming from a dying man. York, though, tells Gaunt that it is useless, since Richard doesn't listen to counsel and is constantly flattered by his friends.

Gaunt's illness appears to have shaken the foundations of his belief, as he now wishes to give honest advice to Richard instead of fearing the religious implications of standing up to the monarch. He notes that the language of a dying man is imbued with a special kind of power, and thus hopefully Richard will listen to him.

But Gaunt says that he believes himself a newly inspired prophet, and he launches a long speech in which he characterizes England as being like the Garden of Eden and as a mother to its people, and as a land that has its reputation in jeopardy. England, he says, is conquering herself.

This monologue describes England in beautiful figurative language. It emphasizes the paradisal and motherly qualities of the state, as well as the peril England faces under the rule of Richard.

After Gaunt's speech concludes, Richard enters, and Gaunt begins punning on his own name (since *gaunt* also means lean and old), immediately taking up a new, confrontational tone with the king. The two exchange single lines (known as stichomythia), and then Gaunt launches another speech, this time directed at Richard. Gaunt says that Richard is sick and dying, and that flatterers surround him. If Edward III, he says, had seen how his grandson (Richard) would treat his sons (Gloucester, and Gaunt himself), then Edward would have prevented Richard from ever becoming king. Gaunt continues berating Richard, who he says is merely a landlord of England, now subject to its laws instead of master of them.

The change in Gaunt's attitude is apparent, as he stands up to Richard here and also mocks himself on his deathbed. Gaunt's second speech is made even more powerful in contrast with the short, one line exchange preceding it. Though Gaunt is the one dying, he says that Richard is figuratively sick, suggesting that his position on the throne is in jeopardy. Following the Duchess's advice, Gaunt invokes family, berating Richard for acting so badly against members of his own family line.

Richard interrupts this rant and even threatens to execute Gaunt, but Gaunt continues his tirade, saying that he should not be spared just because he is the son of Edward III, since Richard has already killed a son of Edward III: Gloucester. Gaunt exits the stage, and York urges the king to take the rant as only the ravings of a very sick and old man who still loves the king. Just as Richard agrees with this, Northumberland announces that Gaunt has died.

Here, Gaunt makes explicit the accusation that Richard was involved with Gloucester's death. This marks a full departure from Gaunt's earlier position, that a family trifle is less important than keeping his honor and his religious duty to the king. Just as Gaunt's important warnings are ignored as the nonsense of a sick man, Northumberland announces that Gaunt has died.

Upon hearing this announcement, Richard immediately decides to seize all of Gaunt's property to support the war in Ireland. At this decision, York starts to speak out against Richard, saying that though he has remained patient through the death of Gloucester, the banishment of Henry, and all of the bad things happening in England, he feels Richard is "**bloody** with the enemies of his kin." York explains that Gaunt's lands and money should legally be the inheritance of Henry, and that inheritance is the very means by which Richard received the **crown**. Seizing Henry's inheritance, he says, is dangerous, since it calls into question Richard's own power.

Here Richard makes a major mistake, seizing Gaunt's property and thereby disinheriting Henry for the advancement of his ill-advised war with Ireland. York, whose brother has just died, attempts to stand up to Richard and counsel him against this decision. He has been quiet even throughout the crimes Richard committed against their mutual family, but York warns Richard that by disinheriting Henry he continues this series of actions and delegitimizes the very means by which he was crowned king of England.

Ultimately, though, Richard ignores York and takes the land and money anyways. After York exits, Richard sends his men out and announces that he will leave the next day for Ireland. The king then exits as well.

This is the last, critical mistake of king Richard. Not only does he turn his nobles against him by disinheriting Henry, but he also leaves the country at a dangerous, inopportune time.

Northumberland, Willoughby, and Ross all stay on stage, and begin talking about what has just happened. After reassuring each other that they are trustworthy, they begin speaking their minds, saying that the king is not acting like himself and that they disagree with the decision to disinherit Henry. Northumberland notes that Richard has spent more money during peace times than other kings have in war, suggesting Richard is irresponsible and an over-spender. Thus, to fund the Irish war, Richard must impose heavy taxes. Northumberland then announces that Henry, along with a group of men, is coming back to England with an army the moment that Richard leaves for Ireland. Northumberland hopes this will provide them with the opportunity to "redeem from broking pawn the blemished **crown**."

Here we see nobles beginning to grow in boldness, unafraid to (privately) criticize the supposedly infallible and divinely appointed ruler of England. Richard is characterized as irresponsible and vain, leading to the need for unpopular taxes to fund the Irish war. Northumberland's reference to the "blemished crown" currently in the hold of a pawn broker is a perfect example of the crown symbolizing the state of the monarchy itself. As Richard's reputation is stained, so the crown in Northumberland's imagery is blemished and in need of redemption.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

In this scene, Bushy and Bagot, friends of Richard, attempt to comfort Richard's Queen, who is upset since Richard is leaving for Ireland. She says that she senses something terrible is coming, and Bushy notes the difference between true grief and the shadows of grief, which are often only imaginary. This feeling or conceit of grief, imaginary or not, is to the Queen something substantial and real.

Richard's Queen seems to sense that Richard is making a terrible mistake, and that bad things (for her at least) are coming to England. Her discussion about grief is an example of the exploration of appearances and reality, as Bushy questions whether her grief is legitimate or merely a shadow or appearance. To the Queen, the internal idea of grief is real and substantive.

As the discussion on grief ends, Green enters looking for Richard. Green hopes to tell Richard that Henry has returned and grouped with Northumberland, Ross, and Willoughby. After Richard's Queen says this must be the grief she foresaw, York enters and says that he is too old and weak to properly defend England.

Green enters just too late, as Richard has already left and cannot hear the crucial information that Henry is returning to claim his inheritance. Richard has abandoned England for his Irish war and left it in the hands of York, who cannot properly defend the throne.

A servant enters and informs everyone that the Duchess of Gloucester has died. York says that though he is related to both Henry and Richard, and he acknowledges that Richard wronged Henry, he will still side with the king because of his duty. After he exits, Bushy and Green say they'll go to Bristol Castle, and Bagot says that he'll go to Ireland to tell Richard what has happened. The three fear they'll never meet again.

Though York is pulled by his blood relationship to both Henry and Richard, and though he is able to acknowledge that Richard is acting unfairly, he still (like his brother once did) believes that he has a duty to support the king, even though he doesn't have the power to do much with that support.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Henry and Northumberland enter to begin this scene, heading for Berkeley Castle even though they don't quite know where it is. Soon Harry Percy enters, hoping to lend his service to Henry, whom he has never met. After they are introduced and Percy swears his loyalty, Percy says that Berkeley Castle is close and manned by 300 men.

The introduction of Henry and Percy is especially significant given their dispute in Henry IV Part 1, as Henry will at once battle with Percy and wish that he had Percy for a son instead of his own disappointing Hal.

At this moment Ross and Willoughby enter, and after them comes Berkeley, who carries a message for Henry, who in turn states that he is in England to stake a claim to his rightful inheritance, including the title of Lancaster. Berkeley says that the Duke of York has sent him.

Here, Henry claims that he only wants what is rightfully his: his inheritance. He is not yet making an overt claim to the throne, and he attempts to appear peaceful and obedient to Richard.

York then enters and begins scolding Henry for violating Richard's decree of banishment by stepping again on English soil. He says that he would take action against Henry if he were a younger, abler man. Henry asks what he has done wrong, and York responds that he has committed treason and rebellion and returned despite being banished.

York, who has expressed sympathy for Henry, tries to hold on to his honor and continue defending Richard, England, and the sanctity of the throne and the laws of the country. By returning to England, technically Henry has committed treason.

Henry's clever response is that he was banished under a different title and has simply come back to England to claim a new one that is rightfully his ("Lancaster"). Henry tells York that he sees his father in him, and asks the Duke to look past the supposed treason. Henry says "I am a subject, / and I challenge law," demanding his rights and beginning to assert the notion that Richard can be held accountable for his actions on the throne.

Henry uses clever language in response to York, saying that he has done nothing wrong since he is back in England under a different name and title. Here he begins to suggest the idea that citizens can make demands of kings, and that monarchs can he held accountable by the people and the laws of England.

Northumberland and the other nobles agree that Henry has been mistreated, and even York agrees that Richard has been unfair and a subpar king. York says, however, that staging a rebellion is still wrong. Northumberland assures York that Henry is merely there to reclaim his titles, nothing more, and York admits that he doesn't have the power to stop Henry and his forces. Instead, he offers them hospitality in Berkeley Castle. They accept, and ask York to accompany them later on their journey to Bristol Castle to confront Bushy and Bagot. York agrees, despite hating the fact that he is now forced to break England's current laws (i.e. the commands of Richard).

Henry's popularity is apparent, as all of the nobles agree with him. And York, who keeps his honor in officially supporting the king, admits that Richard is unfair and a bad ruler. He cannot make Henry's political leap, however, of believing that a king's bad behavior can be justification for rebellion. At the same time, York doesn't have the forces to stop Henry, so instead he decides to offer hospitality and prevent any bloodshed. The ease with which Henry moves through England in this play is contrasted by the war-centric plays that follow in the tetralogy.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

In this brief scene a Welsh Captain tells Salisbury that the army has waited ten days, and, having no word of Richard, will now disperse. Though Salisbury tells him to stay, the captain refuses, saying that they believe Richard is dead.

Though the Welsh mistakenly believe that Richard has literally died, their dispersal can be seen as indicating that, figuratively, Richard is as good as dead, as he no longer has the power to defend the throne.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Act three begins with kinglike Henry calling forth Bushy and Green, and then proceeding to deliver a long speech in which he chastises them for misleading the king and aiding Richard in the decision to banish and disinherit him. Henry thus sentences Bushy and Green to death. He then instructs York treat the Richard's Queen fairly.

In this scene, though Henry has not made an official claim to the throne, he begins using kingly language and demeanor, appearing more and more like a monarch despite maintaining that he is only in England for the title of Lancaster.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

This scene takes place on the coast of Wales. Here Richard is thrilled to return to his kingdom (from Ireland), despite the fact that it is now filled with rebels. He urges the earth of England itself to be hostile to Henry and those who would usurp Richard's **crown**. After this speech, Carlisle reassures the king, saying that the power that made him king (i.e. God) has the power to ensure that he stays king.

Richard invokes the power of England itself, hoping that it will support him. However, he is more focused on his kingly understanding of England as opposed to believing England to be made up of the common people, who mostly support Henry. Carlisle, though, reassures Richard by restating the belief that, despite what any citizen might think, Richard still has the divine right to the throne.

Richard lashes out, saying that when the sun is on the other side of the globe (symbolizing a king's absence from his country), thieves and murderers (rebels) sneak out. But when the sun returns, he says, light shines over all of the guilty men, and all of the traitors are shown for what they truly are. Thus, he says, he need not fear Henry.

Richard uses figurative language to describe the way that his detractors have shown themselves during his absence in Ireland. According to his metaphor, his return will shine light on the evil men, revealing them as traitors and securing his position on the throne.

What's more, Richard argues, nothing on earth, nor all the water in the sea can wash the royal "balm" from a king appointed by God. For every soldier Henry has, Richard says, God has an angel that will defend him.

Richard continues expressing the belief that he rules by divine right, and that no human citizen truly has the power to depose a king appointed by God.

However, this optimism is quickly dispelled when Salisbury enters and informs the king that the Welsh army has dispersed. Immediately, Richard turns pale, saying that the **blood** of those thousands of men has rushed from his face. But he forgets himself for only a moment, and then again reminds himself that he is king.

Here Richard's kingly body is more aligned with the people, as their blood is figured as the blood within his face. But this association with the people is also unkingly, and soon Richard reassures himself of his divinely appointed position.

Again, though, Richard is deflated, as he braces for the worst possible news (his own death) when Scroop enters. Scroop says that as Henry marches through the country, people both old and young have been flocking to his cause and joining the rebellion. What's more, Bagot, Bushy, and Green are all with Henry. Though first it seems they have defected and betrayed Richard, Scroop clarifies that they have been executed.

In an emerging pattern, Richard becomes deflated again by bad news, as Henry has received popular support and very little resistance. What's more, the allies of the king are dead. England itself seems to be ignoring Richard's call to resist Henry's campaign for the throne.

With this news Richard feels completely defeated. He says that they should all begin preparing their wills, and that their lands and lives and everything are all now Henry's. The only thing that they possess for themselves now is death and their skin. He utterly gives up and consigns to sit on the floor and tell stories of the deaths of kings, some of which seem to echo other Shakespeare plays. It is here that he refers to himself as flesh and **blood**, and asks, since he is so subjected, how can he be called a king?

Richard here begins to grasp the inevitability of his defeat. He now believes that the only things he owns are his death and his skin, a morbid image suggesting the despair he feels in this situation. In a meta-theatrical moment, Richard starts referencing tales about kings dying, some of which sound like other Shakespeare plays. Finally, in a break from earlier imagery in which he was figured as the sun, Richard admits to being just flesh and blood, a mere human subject instead of a divinely appointed king.

After this lengthy speech, Carlisle tells Richard that fearing and wailing only strengthen their enemies, and that the king needs to prepare to fight. It's much better to fight and die, he says, then to simply die afraid. Richard agrees and decides he will fight Henry, but almost immediately again he is broken with the bad news that York has joined up with the potential usurper. Richard cries out, asking what could possibly make him feel better now, and then he decides to retreat to Flint Castle and allow his soldiers to disperse.

Carlisle encourages Richard, though he knows the situation is still utterly dire. The pattern of Richard's spirits rising and falling (which mirrors the continuous thematic imagery of rise and fall surrounding Henry and Richard) continues, as Richard is again deflated by the news that York has defected. At this point he is devoid of hope, and he gives up any attempt of waging war to defend his crown.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

The scene begins with Henry recapping the information learned in the previous scene: Richard's armies have dispersed, and he has met his few allies on the coast. Northumberland reports that it is good news, and that Richard is hiding nearby. York then corrects him, since Northumberland, accidentally or not, left off the title "king" when referring to Richard. York is well aware of Henry's ambition to take the **crown**, though Henry and Northumberland here deny it.

Northumberland's language use is essentially a verbal rebellion. Either by accident or by mistake, he does not call Richard king, revealing Henry's ambition (and Northumberland's support for this ambition) to usurp the throne and take the crown for himself. However, the two men continue to deny this ambition in order to keep up appearances.

Percy then enters and says that Richard is in Flint Castle along with his remaining supporters. Henry instructs Percy to enter the castle and declare that Henry pledges his love and allegiance to Richard, and that he is here to lay down his arms, provided that his banishment is revoked and his titles and lands are restored. If not, then Henry will use his army to take what he wants.

Henry simultaneously asserts his allegiance to king Richard and threatens the king. He is able to do this because he is in a position of power; Richard cannot refuse Henry, since he lacks an army to defeat Henry's. The allegiance Henry pledges through Percy, then, is just a political ruse.

Just when Henry completes the message that he wants Percy to send, Richard appears. Henry compares the king to a "discontented sun" that is jealous of the clouds, but York remarks that Richard still looks like a king.

Here Henry takes up the metaphor of Richard as the sun, but rather than flattering the king, Henry criticizes him as jealous and appearance-focused. York's remark that Richard still looks like a king only furthers Henry's criticism that the king is superficial.

Richard then begins a speech in which he demands that his subjects treat him like the king that he is. If he is no longer king, he asks, then where is the hand of God that has deposed him? No human hand "of **blood** and bone," he says, can remove a king's power, unless by evil usurpation. He continues to say that despite how it may seem, God is still on his side, and by rebelling against him, they have brought the wrath of God upon their children. He concludes by addressing Henry directly: Richard says that every step on English land taken by Henry is treason, and that before Richard peacefully surrenders the **crown** that Henry wants, "Ten thousand bloody crowns of mother's sons / Shall ill become the flower of England's face, / Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace / To scarlet indignation, and bedew / Her pastor's grass with faithful English blood."

Despite the fact that he is overpowered, Richard tries again to assert that he rules by divine right, and that no human can truly depose him. Richard then expresses what Gaunt feared early in the play, namely that by standing up to Richard the rebels have incurred God's wrath. Richard also puns on "crown," saying that the thousand heads of children (or just men who are sons of mothers) will change the complexion of England's face (i.e. die) before he surrenders the throne. This image returns to and reverses a metaphor Richard used earlier about blood rushing from his cheeks as his armies dispersed.

Northumberland responds to this speech in an attempt to placate Richard, assuring him that Henry is bending his knee and only back in England to reclaim what is rightfully his. And though he is afraid that he is debasing himself in the process, Richard agrees to Henry's demands. Privately, Richard says he regrets ever banishing the proud Henry. He wonders what will become of him and what he must do, and he seems aware that he will soon be deposed. He says he'll give up all his kingly possessions, including his "large kingdom for a little grave." By this point, he has completely given in to grief.

Northumberland continues the public denial that Henry is in England for any reason other than his inheritance. Richard has no choice but to agree, and privately regrets the critical mistake of banishing and disinheriting Henry in the first place. For all of his proud speeches about ruling by divine right and blood staining England's grass, Richard is understands that he will most likely soon surrender his crown and his life.

When the two men finally stand in front of one another again, Henry kneels before Richard, but Richard accuses Henry of making an attempt to gain the **crown**. Henry still maintains that he is here only for what is rightfully his, but Richard says that he is willing to give up the crown, and that he will do what he must since he is being forced.

Though Henry appears to kneel before the king, Richard knows that in reality, Henry's ambition is reaching upward for the crown, and that Richard himself is the one who will soon be forced to kneel and fall.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

In the Duke of York's garden, Richard's Queen is still sad, despite the efforts of a Lady to cheer her up. Soon a gardener and his workers enter, and the Queen and Lady hide behind a tree to eavesdrop. The gardener gives instructions, but the men question why they should do the work when the country is in such disarray. The Gardener assures his men, though, that the person responsible for England's bad state, Richard, and all of his men, have been captured or killed by Henry Bolingbroke. The gardener is certain that Richard will soon be deposed.

The metaphor of England as a garden is continued here. The working people refuse to work because the country is in such bad shape, legitimizing Henry's claim and the support he received from common people. The gardener expresses the bold idea that common citizens can make demands on their king if they are dissatisfied with the state of their country.

At this point, the Queen steps forward to confront the gardener. Using figurative language in which the gardener is figured as Adam in the garden of Eden, the Queen asks why he would say that Richard is deposed. The gardener responds that everyone has sided with Henry, making it all but certain that he will overpower and depose the king. The Queen decides to head to London to meet Richard and share in his woe, and the gardeners continue their work.

Like her husband, Richard's Queen uses powerful figurative language. By contrast, the gardener is extremely direct in his assertion that almost all of the nobles and people have sided with Henry, and that Richard's fall is all but certain.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

This scene begins with Henry continuing his investigation into the murder of Gloucester. He begins by calling forward Bagot, who indicates Aumerle's involvement in the crime and says that Aumerle even hoped for Henry's death. Aumerle, of course, denies all of this, and, in a gesture that parallels the play's first scene, he throws down his gage in an offer to battle Bagot to the death.

Again, despite publicly denying that he wants the crown, Henry is already acting like a king. He continues to preside over the murder of Gloucester in an echo of the play's opening scene, but Henry is acting as king in this scenario instead of accuser.

Though Henry stops Bagot from picking up the gage, Fitzwater steps up and throws his own gage, also accusing Aumerle of treason and of involvement in Gloucester's death. When Aumerle calls Fitzwater a liar, Percy steps up to defend his honor. Another lord begins to attack Aumerle, who is finally defended by Surrey, who in turn begins to quarrel with Fitzwater. Henry ultimately says that all of these challenges will wait until his banishment is officially revoked.

This exchange is slightly ridiculous, and it at once suggests the humor and excessiveness of ceremony and asserts the difficulty of knowing for certain who is honorable, who is a traitor, and who merely appears to be one way or the other.

After a snarky comment from Carlisle, York enters and says that Richard has agreed to make Henry his heir and descend from the throne. York then announces Henry as king Henry IV, and Henry says that he'll ascend the throne in God's name. But to this announcement Carlisle speaks out: he asks, "What subject can give sentence on his king?" and challenges the legitimacy of Henry's claim to the throne. He calls Henry a traitor, and then makes a prophesy: "If you **crown** him, let me prophesy / The **blood** of English shall manure the ground / And future ages groan for this foul act; / Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels, / And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars / Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound."

Despite his public denials, Henry becomes crowned King Henry IV, and he assumes the position by, according to himself, divine right. But Carlisle boldly speaks out against Henry, arguing that subjects do not have the power to sentence kings, to make demands on kings, or to depose them. Henry's claim, he says, is illegitimate. He then prophesizes that a great deal of blood will be shed in England following this coronation. Carlisle's prediction is ultimately proved true by the Wars of the Roses that will follow and lead to the rise of the Tudor line.

But since Henry has been crowned, Carlisle's speech is figured as treason, and so he is arrested. Henry then calls forth Richard so that he may surrender in public. Richard soon enters and laments the betrayal of so many of his former allies; whereas only one Judas out of twelve apostles betrayed Jesus, he says, Richard feels betrayed by twelve thousand men and all of England itself. He then asks why he has been summoned, and York answers that it is to publicly resign and pass the **crown** to Henry.

Carlisle's bold speech in support of the old king is treason to a new king. Richard believes that he has been betrayed by all of the people in England and the very country itself, since they all sided with Henry and forced him to give up the throne. Even though Richard is basically powerless, he is still required to publicly crown Henry to make it legitimate, suggesting a grain of truth to Carlisle's speech that only a king can depose a king.

Richard then takes the **crown** and tells Henry to seize it. They both hold on to either end of the crown, which Richard compares to two buckets, one pouring woe and tears into the other from a higher position. Richard is willing to resign his crown, but his griefs, he says, cannot be passed on; he will still remain king of those. Ultimately, he says that "With mine own hands I give away my crown," a key step for Henry's hope for a legitimate claim. Richard must denounce his crown and dethrone himself using the official speech and power of a king.

This striking image of both men holding the crown symbolizes the transfer of power, and the pouring bucket imagery is the climax of a series of rise and fall images that mirror Henry's rise to the throne and Richard's downfall. As Richard said earlier, only a king can de-crown a king, and so he is forced to make one final speech as king in order to officially transfer his powers to Henry.

The final thing required of Richard is that he read out loud the list of accusations against him for crimes against England while in power. Richard at first refuses, and then says his eyes are too full of tears, and he soon claims that he is now nameless, since his identity was so tied up with the **crown**. In his distress, he requests a mirror, and while it is brought out, Northumberland encourages him to read from the list of crimes. But Richard says instead that he will read from the book he sees in the mirror, where all his sins are recorded in himself and his reflection.

Having transferred power officially to Henry, Richard is now nameless and feels like he has lost his identity. To humiliate him, Henry and his men force Richard to read a list of his crimes, but the ever figurative Richard says that he will read from the book he sees in the mirror, suggesting that all his crimes are personal faults. We can also note a clever multi-language pun here, as the words for body and book in Latin are both "corpus."

Looking into the mirror, Richard reflects on his face and the kingdom he has lost, before throwing it to the ground and shattering the glass. He says then that sorrow has destroyed his face. To this comment the new king responds that the shadow of sorrow destroyed the shadow of his face, and Richard responds by saying that it's true, beginning a brief speech that explores interiority. Richard says that any outward showing of grief is just a shadow to the true, internal grief. Inside, says Richard, is where the true substance lies. After this speech, Richard asks to be taken away, just so that he doesn't have to see Henry anymore; the old king is then taken to the tower, and most everyone exits.

Dramatically, Richard shatters the mirror on the ground. Henry jokes that the shadow of sorrow (the outward expression of sadness) has destroyed the shadow of Richard's face (his reflection). Richard then remarks that Henry is right, saying that any outward display of grief is just a shadow of the true substance of grief, which is purely internal. These lines show Shakespeare's forward-thinking work on the self and ideas of appearance and reality and the interior vs. the exterior.

Aumerle and Carlise, however, remain on stage, along with the Abbot of Westminster. Aumerle asks the other two men if there is any plot to rid the country of the usurpation that has just occurred, and the Abbot tells Aumerle to follow him home, where they'll discuss a plot to assassinate Henry.

Though this plot to assassinate Henry will be thwarted, the fact that it immediately surfaces after his coronation foreshadows the resistance he will face from former allies in Henry IV Part 1 and Part 2.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

Act five begins with Richard's Queen reflecting on Richard's looming imprisonment and lamenting the recent turn of events. But when Richard meets her on stage, he urges her not to be sad and to think of his time as king as merely a happy dream. He tells her to go to France and hide in a religious house where she will be safe.

Richard's suggestion that his Queen think of the situation as a happy dream echoes Gaunt's attempts to console Henry after the new king was banished, though the roles have been reversed by the shift in power.

To this the Queen asks if Henry has deposed Richard's intellect along with his **crown**, questioning why he is surrendering and submitting without any fight whatsoever. But Richard merely says that she should think of this interaction as his deathbed, and he asks her to tell his sad story to others: that of a rightful king deposed.

The Queen questions if Richard's intelligence has also been taken away, suggesting that he is acting foolishly and cowardly, but Richard is emotionally broken and believes himself to be essentially dead already.

At this point Northumberland enters and says that Henry has decided Richard will be taken to Pomfret instead of the Tower. To him, Richard (accurately) predicts that the peace between Henry and Northumberland will not last, as Northumberland will not be satisfied no matter what Henry gives him, and Henry will always know that Northumberland helped unseat one king and will therefore fear that he might attempt it again.

Though Henry's power over Richard is absolute at this point, Richard is able to see that the alliance between Northumberland and the new king will soon fracture. This breakage makes up much of the conflict of the plays that follow.

Richard also laments that he has been doubly divorced, since Henry has split him up from his **crown** and from his wife. Though they request to be banished together, in a painful moment, the two are forcibly separated as Richard is taken to his imprisonment.

Richard's assertion that he was married to his crown (and now divorced from it) could be an echo of Queen Elizabeth I's status of "virgin queen," married to England itself, in Shakespeare's time.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

This scene begins with a conversation between York and his wife the Duchess of York. The Duke has been telling his wife the story of Henry's rise to power, and says that the common people cheered for the new king. Richard, on the other hand, received no such welcome, not even a singular "God save him."

Again, the common people's support of Henry and dislike of Richard is emphasized in this quiet family moment where York recapitulates Henry's rise to power.

Soon their son, Aumerle, enters, though he has lost his title since the change in power. York notices a piece of paper on Aumerle's person and demands to see it. When he finally grabs it and reads, he cries out 'treason!'—apparently having discovered Aumerle's involvement in the plot to assassinate Henry. York immediately takes off to inform Henry of the plot, which he says he would do even if Aumerle were twenty times his son. In an attempt to save her son's life, the Duchess of York sends Aumerle after York with instructions to try to get to Henry first in order to beg for forgiveness.

Aumerle interrupts the conversation, and York is now placed in Gaunt's position from earlier in the play: he must choose between family obligation and obligation to the crown. Immediately, York chooses to inform on his son, saying that his obligation to the king is even more than twenty times stronger than his obligation to his traitorous son.

ACT 5, SCENE 3

King Henry begins this scene by wondering where his son is. He reflects that he hasn't seen the son in three months, and that the "wanton and effeminate boy" can most likely be found in one of London's taverns. Henry does say, however, that there is promise and sparks of hope within his son.

Henry here foreshadows much of the family drama that will take place in the following plays, which depict, as Henry here predicts, Henry's son's struggles, faults, and ultimate rise to grace and power.

At this moment a flustered Aumerle enters and asks for a moment alone with the king. He then falls to his knees and begs for a pardon, though he does not wish to say what for. Before he'll say what it is, he wants to lock the door to the room for privacy, and Henry consents, though York soon begins knocking and crying out that Henry should beware. Alerted to danger, Henry draws his sword and lets York into the room.

Aumerle has beaten his father to the king in hopes of receiving a royal pardon before the nature of his treasonous crime can be revealed. Even though he has just taken the throne, Henry is immediately on guard and draws his sword at a moment's notice.

York then gives Henry the writing that revealed the plot. While Henry cries out about the conspiracy and remarks that York's goodness was not transferred to his son, the Duchess of York arrives to beg for Aumerle's life. She drops to her knees and begs him to pardon Aumerle, who immediately joins her in begging. Meanwhile, York kneels, too, and urges Henry not to be too merciful. The Duchess, though, says that York is not earnest in his pleas, and that really he hopes that Henry will pardon Aumerle. After much begging, Henry pardons Aumerle, but orders the capture and death of all the other conspirators.

In one of his first decisions as king, Henry combines both mercy and harsh punishment. For Aumerle (possibly due to family bonds) he offers forgiveness, but for the other conspirators, Henry gives only death. Killing the other conspirators is an act of self-preservation, as Henry needs to appear strong on the throne so as to discourage others from rebelling or attempting to assassinate or depose him.

ACT 5, SCENE 4

In this brief scene, Exton remarks that he heard the king say "Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?" Exton takes this to be an implicit order to kill Richard, and he leaves for Pomfret to commit the murder.

It is unclear whether Henry was implicitly ordering Exton to murder Richard or not, but Henry's refusal to do so outright is likely due to the fact that Richard's own rule was clouded by the knowledge that he was involved in Gloucester's death.

ACT 5, SCENE 5

Act five scene five opens with Richard alone in prison at Pomfret Castle. Speaking a soliloquy, Richard says that he would want to compare his prison to the world, but cannot since the world is filled with people and the prison is complete solitude. To solve this problem, he says his brain will "prove the female" to his soul, his soul will be the father, and together they will create thoughts that will people his isolated prison world. His many thoughts give him many roles to play in prison, but in none of them is he happy, for he has always been "unkinged" by Henry.

In this interesting theatrical soliloquy, Richard reflects on losing the throne and his own despair. Suffering in prison, he envisions a marriage and procreation between his brain, which he figures as female, and his soul, which he figures as male. Together, soul and brain create thoughts and experiences, as well as theatrical roles. Interestingly, his body is left out of this discussion, as he has lost the body politic of England and smashed his body in the form of the mirror.

Suddenly, Richard hears faint music, which is painful, since he cannot hear it uninterrupted. He reflects on time, which he wasted and which now wastes him. He compares himself to a clock, and says that his perception of time is now only marked by sighs and tears and groans. He is afraid that the music will make him insane, but he values it as a sign of love to himself, which is extremely rare in what he views as the "all-hating world."

In his last moments, Richard continues to reflect on himself with figurative language, this time conceiving of himself as a clock. His experience of time, an external thing, is modified by his internal state of sadness, suggesting the power of the interior over the world, which he now views as terrible and "all-hating."

Here a groom from the stable enters to look at the man that was once his king. The groom explains that he dressed the horse that Henry rode on recently, and Richard asks if the horse bore Henry proudly, hoping that it might have thrown him to the ground. As Richard again laments being usurped by Henry, the prison keeper enters and instructs the groom to leave.

Richard imagines an image of a falling Henry, since he himself has fallen, but for now the image is only imagined, as Henry sits proudly on the English throne and Richard nears his death.

After a few exchanges, Richard, who is tired of his imprisonment, begins beating the keeper. The keeper calls for help, and in rush the murderers—Exton and servants. Richard is able to kill two servants, but Exton ultimately strikes him down. In his final breath, Richard tells Exton that he has stained the king's land with the king's **blood**. He cries that his soul is going up while his body sinks, and he dies.

For pretty much the first time in the play, Richard takes action and tries to change his situation. But beating the keeper only ushers in the murderers, and though Richard is able to kill two of them, Exton is ultimately able to slay the former king. The king's final experience of a rising soul and sinking body is another powerful example of the dual imagery of rising and falling that parallels Henry's ascension to the throne and Richard's downfall.

Exton then laments spilling valor and royal **blood**, and wishes that the deed was good. He decides to take the dead king back to the living king.

Exton seems distraught to have killed a former king and spilled what still seems like sacred blood, though he believed he was acting according to the new king's wishes.

ACT 5, SCENE 6

King Henry reports to York that he still awaits news on the rebels. Northumberland then enters and says that they have been captured and killed. The originator of the plan, Percy says, is dead, but the Bishop of Carlisle has been captured alive. However, Henry elects to pardon him because he has seen "high sparks of honor" in Carlisle.

Henry's balance of harsh punishment and mercy is showcased again, as the rebels are reported dead, but Carlisle is granted a pardon for the singular reason that Henry saw honor within him. This comment at once solidifies the importance of honor and the idea that honor is somehow internal and distinct from mere appearance. One can appear honorable, but Carlisle is granted a pardon because his honor is internal and therefore viewed as legitimate.

After the pardon is delivered, Exton enters with Richard's coffin. Henry is careful not to thank Exton, and says that he never ordered this. Though he did wish Richard dead, he cannot thank Exton for the murder, which he did not explicitly desire. The play ends with Henry feeling guilty for shedding **blood** in his path to claim the throne, and so he makes the decision to start a crusade to the Holy Land to "wash this blood off from my guilty hand."

Henry must be careful not to create a situation like the one that started the play, where a king is implicated in the murder of a royal family member. Though there has been little battle or resistance in Henry's claim of England, the new king feels guilty for shedding blood, and so he announces his intent to make a pilgrimage to wash that blood away (although, of course, with a crusade he'd also be going to spill more blood—just in a foreign and "heathen" land instead of in England). As shown in the following plays, however, Henry never really carries out this plan to launch a crusade.

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