

# [Richard ii](https://assignbuster.com/richard-ii/)

Richard became king at the age of ten, taking over for his father, Edward the
Black Prince, Edward IIIs oldest son, who predeceased his father. This
elevation gave the boy authority over all nobles, including his uncles. Once
crowned, Richards right to rule and to have his commands obeyed was supported
by the order of God, since it was believed that the kings power was issued
directly from God. The king served as the representative of God on Earth, and to
resist the will of the king was to onset oneself against the order of the
universe and the will of God. Therefore, the king ruled by divine right, and it
was this belief that served as Richards primary weapon. Richard is a king and
not simply a man and this play is about the claim of a king. Most of Richards
actions have to do with the act of kingly power or the failure to act. Richard
is not just; the matter of Gloucesters death proves just that. As long as
Richard is king he is just the landlord of England. Richard is unjust towards
Gaunt and replies with rage and threat " A lunatic lean-witted fool." His
coldness at the passing of a great man is shocking but with his next lines he
moves from the insensitive to the illegal. When he seizes Gaunts possessions
he breaks the law and deprives Bolingbroke of his inheritance he strikes at the
foundations of his own power but still believes that he is right in everything
that he does. If Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford and the son of the Duke of
Lancaster, does not inherit his father's lands and titles, Richard is
challenging the same rule that gave him the right to govern England, by
inheritance from his father the Black Prince and his grandfather Edward III.

When King Richard lands on the coast of Wales, he is aware of the existence of
the rebellion but convinced that the nature of the kingship will protect him.

Not all the water in the rough rude sea Can wash the balm from an anointed
king... 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...

Richards elaborate comparison here of the king to the sun, leads into his
belief of divine right. Many qualities of this quotation reflect the character
of Richard; he sees himself as the glorious fire, which is parallel to the
traditional image of the King as the sun. When Richard actually removes the
crown, he does so with a poetic flair that intimates that he, a divinely
ordained king, will always possess a majesty that Bolingbroke, forever a
usurper, can only dream of: With mine own tears I wash away my balm, With mine
own hands I give away my crown... The implication is that only a lawful king can
follow this ceremony, and Bolingbroke will never have such status, he will
forever be smaller then Richard, who concludes his performance with a line of
forgiveness. Though I did wish him dead, I hate the murderer... Henry banishes
the knight from his presence and decides on a voyage to the Holy Land to
compensate his guilt. For he has killed a king, the Lords ordained, and it is
a crime that will cast a dark shadow over England for a long time to come. I
believe that Shakespeare was writing this play with the belief in divine right.

Shakespeare is writing this play for the Queens pleasure and his views cannot
be so drastic or he could be beheaded. There are many references to God in
relation to Richard and divine right. When Richard gives up his crown he also
loses his identity, we should hate Richard for being a weak ruler and love
Bolingbroke for being strong and able to take a stand on the many issues Richard
could not, but the reverse happens at the end of this play.