

# [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.