

Richard ii



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Richard became king at the age of ten, taking over for his father, Edward the Black Prince, Edward III's oldest son, who predeceased his father. This elevation gave the boy authority over all nobles, including his uncles. Once crowned, Richard's right to rule and to have his commands obeyed was supported by the order of God, since it was believed that the king's 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 Richard's primary weapon. Richard is a king and not simply a man and this play is about the claim of a king. Most of Richard's actions have to do with the act of kingly power or the failure to act. Richard is not just; the matter of Gloucester's 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 Gaunt's 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 than 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.