

RICHARD III

Character Notes

RICHARD

Before being crowned as King, Richard is the much despised Duke of Gloucester. He is physically deformed, sadistically power-hungry, and unwaveringly intent on succeeding the throne. He will stop at nothing in his plotting and manipulation, and cold-bloodedly murders any member of his own family who is in his way.

CLARENCE

Clarence, also known as George, is Richard's gentle and trusting older brother, and closer in line to the throne than Richard. He is the first person that Richard orders to be imprisoned and murdered in the opening sequences of the play as he begins to unveil his plot to become king. Clarence leaves behind two children, a young son and a daughter.

KING EDWARD IV

Edward IV is the eldest brother to Richard and Clarence and is the king when the play begins. Edward was personally involved, along with Richard, in the brutal overthrow of the Lancaster regime and Margaret's family. He is unsuspecting of Richard's manipulation and trusts him to a fault, eventually leading to his own destruction.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Elizabeth is the wife of King Edward IV (widowed early on in the play) and the mother of Prince Edward, the young Duke of York (one of the "Princes in the Tower"), and their older sister, young Elizabeth. Once their father, Edward IV dies, Prince Edward is next in line for the throne. Queen Elizabeth is aware of the vulnerability of her young sons and is outspoken in her opposition to Richard. She is also the mother of Lords Gray and Dorset from a marriage before Edward.

THE DUCHESS OF YORK

The Duchess of York is the mother of Edward IV, Richard, and Clarence. She is Elizabeth's mother-in-law, and she curses her own son, Richard, for the deeds he has done and the loved ones he has murdered.

BUCKINGHAM

The Duke of Buckingham is Richard's right-hand man in his scheming and plotting to succeed the throne. He helps Richard in return for promises of land,

riches, and prosperity. Richard eventually turns against Buckingham (when he is reluctant to murder the little princes) and has him murdered as well.

LADY ANNE

Anne is the widow of Prince Edward, who was the son of the previous king, Edward IV. She despises Richard for causing the death of her husband and of his father, but eventually agrees to marry him. Once King, Richard decides that a marriage to the young Princess Elizabeth would make him more secure, and he prepares to do away with Anne. He orders messengers to say that Anne is ill and soon to die. We do not know how Anne is killed, but we know that she does since she appears as a ghost on the eve of Richard's last battle.

OLD QUEEN MARGARET

Margaret is the widow of the dead King Henry VI of the House of Lancaster. She is mother of the slain Prince Edward who, along with her husband, was murdered by Richard and the House of York. She hates and curses both Richard and his family, all of whom were complicit in the destruction of the House of Lancaster.

STANLEY

Lord Stanley is the Earl of Derby, and is the stepfather of Richmond. He secretly helps Richmond prepare for battle against Richard.

LORD HASTINGS

Hastings is a Lord who remains loyal to King Edward IV. Richard eventually has him murdered.

RICHMOND

A member of a branch of the House of Lancaster, Richmond eventually becomes King Henry VII and begins the Tudor Dynasty. He challenges Richard and the House of York to battle, and is victorious in the Wars of the Roses, thereby assuming the throne.

LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY AND THE MARQUESS OF DORSET

Lord Rivers is Queen Elizabeth's brother. Lords Grey and Dorset are the sons of Elizabeth from her first marriage. Richard eventually has both Rivers and Grey executed, but Dorset is able to escape unharmed.

THE TWO YOUNG PRINCES

Prince Edward and the Duke of York are the young sons of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth. They are the nephews of Richard. As Prince Edward is the rightful heir to the throne following the death of his father, and as the Duke of York is next in line, Richard has both young boys murdered.

CATESBY AND SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE

Catesby and Ratcliffe are two of Richard's principle councilors among the nobility.

TYRELL

Tyrell is a murderer who is known for doing anything for money. Richard hires him to kill his nephews, Prince Edward and the Duke of York.

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK

A nobleman.

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

A nobleman.

TWO MURDERERS

The two murderers are sent to kill Clarence in the Tower.

A KEEPER

The Keeper of the Tower stays with Clarence until the murderers arrive and force him to leave.

A PAGE

A page is sent by Richard to find Tyrell to murder the Princes.

GUARDS, BEARERS, MESSENGERS