



Richard II

The play opens with the accusation of Henry Bolingbroke that Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, is responsible for the murder of Richard's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. Richard decrees that the two shall settle the matter in trial by combat, but revokes this option as Norfolk and Bolingbroke are readying to attack each other. His new decision is that both men are to be banished. Within a short time, Bolingbroke's father, the Duke of Lancaster dies; Richard seizes the late duke's estates in order to raise capital for a campaign against Ireland.

In the meantime, Bolingbroke has returned to find grumbling amidst Richard's nobles—most notably the Earl of Northumberland, who joins with other disaffected nobles against the Duke of York, Richard's regent while the King is in Ireland. Upon Richard's return, he learns that Bolingbroke has not only returned to reclaim the lands he should have inherited upon his father's death, but that he has dispersed Richard's army and executed a pair of Richard's favorites. Richard flees to Flint Castle for his own protection.

Bolingbroke meets him there and takes him back to London as a prisoner. There, in a session of Parliament, Richard is made to confess crimes against the state, the end result of which he must forfeit his crown to Bolingbroke (who becomes King Henry IV). Intrigue develops as the Duke of York's son, Aumerle, conspires against the new King Henry in response to Richard's loss of the throne. Aumerle is granted clemency, but Richard is imprisoned in Pomfreet Castle. While there, Sir Pierce of Exton murders him (believing this to be the wish of the king). Henry disavows the deed when he hears of it, however, and promises a Crusade to atone for Richard's death.

Dramatis Personae

King Richard the Second
John of Gaunt
Edmund of Langley, Duke of York
Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford; later Henry IV
Duke of Aumerle
Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk
Duke of Surrey
Earl of Salisbury
Lord Berkeley
Bushy
Bagot
Green
Earl of Northumberland
Henry Percy, called Hotspur
Lord Ross
Lord Willoughby
Lord Fitzwater
Bishop of Carlisle
Abbot of Westminster
Lord Marshal
Sir Stephen Scoop
Sir Pierce of Exton
Welsh Captain
Queen to King Richard
Duchess of Gloucester
Duchess of York
Lady attending the Queen
Lords, Heralds, Officers, Soldiers
Gardeners, Keepers, Messengers
Groom and other Attendants