

Richard II Act Two

Summary and key quotes

Act Two Sc. 2

- Now Richard has left the play Shakespeare spends no time in muddying our dislike of him.
- First up we have the Queen's genuine grief for her *'sweet Richard'*. There is a lengthy scene (often cut from performances) where the Queen confines in Bushy she has *'Some unborn sorrow'*. Bushy true to form tries to flatter the Queen that nothing is wrong.
- Green brings in news of the return of Bolingbroke, landing at Ravenspurgh, and the Queen continues: *'Green, thou art the midwife to my woe, / And Bolingbroke my sorrow's dismal heir:'*
- **Analysis:** *Through the Queen we see that others care for Richard, and he may not be the selfish child we have been presented with so far.*

Act Two Sc.2

- The Duke of York enters desperately trying to raise money and troops to resist Bolingbroke, noting that *'now comes the sick hour'* that Gaunt foretold.
- As soon as York mentions he will turn to Woodstock's widow he is told she recently died.
- A grief stricken York laments the fact there's no news from Ireland, outlines the conflict within him (he understands and sees justice in Bolingbroke's claims) and pleads with Bushy, Bagot and Green to help him raise an army (though he seems to acknowledge that this is futile).

Act Two Sc.2

- Alone on stage we see the true nature of Richard's flatterers (Bushy, Bagot and Green).
- What does Bagot say about the 'commons'?
- Green, despite York's pleas to raise troops, decides to flee where?
- What does Bushy say about the commons?
- Where does Bagot decide to go?
- Quote to show that Green knows their position is impossible.

Act Two Sc.2

- *Analysis: By the end of this scene we should now feel sorry for York, who voices the chaos in Richard's kingdom. We sympathise with the Queen who feels genuine love for her 'sweet Richard'. We may also feel that Richard's flatterers (who seem able to tell the reality of their situation from fantasy) have lead the king astray (or are at least as despicable as the 'degenerate king!').*

Act Two Sc.3

- Bolingbroke and his allies travel south as more nobles join his cause.
- They confront York, who chastises Bolingbroke for having his *'forbidden legs / Dared once to touch a dust of England's ground? / But then more 'why?' why have they dared to march / So many miles upon her peaceful bosom.'*
- Bolingbroke argues his case as a son, and appeals to York *'methinks in you I see old Gaunt alive'*.
- York then relents *'I do remain as neuter'* and *'Nor friends nor foes, to me welcome you are'*, and stands aside.
- The scene ends with Bolingbroke swearing to go to Bristol castle and deal with *'Bushy, Bagot and their complices, / The caterpillars of the commonwealth / Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away'*.

Act Two Sc.3

- *Analysis: We should note how easily England seems to be accepting to Bolingbroke's rebellion. An example of how sick Richard's reputation has become? York continues being trapped between what he should do and what he can do (Richard's fantasies and reality). Different productions will play York's allegiances differently, but note how he, like Gaunt states that the soil has sovereignty. We should consider Bolingbroke's rights for pursuing Bushy, Bagot and Green. The audience would agree he has moral right, but his stated legal rights have nothing with cleansing the kingdom of 'caterpillars' - that's a monarch's role.*
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Act Two S. 4

- Richard's remaining allies, the Welsh, disband.
- They are characterised by their superstitions (which many of Shakespeare's audience would have shared).
- Quote a single of doom that the Captain mentions.