

Richard II Act One

What the characters are thinkingV's
How they act

Act One

- To fully understand the first act we need to realise ***what is not said*** is almost more important than what is.
- The atmosphere should crackle with tension as the characters try to hold back their suspicions and anger from each other.
- This then reaches a crescendo in Act 2 Sc.1 when Gaunt, on his death bed, can face it no more and tries to council Richard's 'unstaidd youth'.
- As a result it is worth recapping how the characters must appear and what they are really thinking.
- This will also provide a challenge to the actors and the production as they need to let the audience know that although they are saying one thing they may mean or feel something very different.

Richard

Thinks

- Suspects Bolingbroke might know the truth about Woodstock.
- Thinks Mowbray did the right thing.
- Jealous of Bolingbroke's popularity.
- Wants to move on from his Uncle's death (he benefits from it and now wants everyone to forget about it).
- Worried that his authority is being questioned.

Acts

- As king must appear completely unbiased. (he fails)
- Shows little grief for the death of his uncle.
- Shows anger (of a petulant sort) when he feels his authority may be questioned.

Bolingbroke

Thinks

- Is convinced Mowbray is responsible for his uncles death.
- Suspects Richard may have had something to do with it.
- Might want to become king (spoiler: the play ends with Bolingbroke on the throne as King Henry V - one of the challenges is to decide if this happened entirely by accident, if Bolingbroke wanted the crown all along, or when exactly did he decide to usurp his cousin)

Acts

- Must appear to show loyalty to his King.
- Also show love for his father (this should not be more than he shows as loyalty to the king - in this Bolingbroke fails).

Mowbray

Thinks

- He acted out of loyalty to his king when Woodstock was murdered.
- Thinks he will win favour with the King because of his actions.
- Bolingbroke wants to challenge, possibly usurp Richard.

Acts

- Must show loyalty to his king.

Gaunt

Thinks

- Richard had a hand in Woodstock's death.
- God will sort out their problems.
- Worries that his son will drag the family into trouble, and should let old grievances lie.

Acts

- Conflicted: has to show loyalty to his King, but also needs to show loyalty to the rest of his family (brothers, sisters-in-law, the memory of his father).
- Tries to counsel his son and others of that generation.