

Richard II Essay Plan

Question: Choose a play in which the audience's attitude towards a character changes.
Show how the dramatist presentation of the character affects the audience's attitude and how the change occurs.

.Planning:

The first half of the play the audience dislike Richard - he is vain, egotistical, arrogant, childish, petulant, a poor king, indecisive, callous, and out of touch with his kingdom.

*Think: What tells us this? List a few examples from Act 1.
When is Richard at his worst?*

Then the change in the character - Once Richard realises he has lost his kingdom, he turns reflective, as one of the most eloquent characters in all of Shakespeare he is able to describe his fall from high regard beautifully. We should slowly begin to sympathise with him.

There are still problems - Richard is still incredibly self centred - evidence?

Think: During Act 4 our sympathies are manipulated - what do Bolingbroke's forces do that turns us against the? What does Richard say that suggests he cannot conceive of himself without the crown?

He maybe never really faces up to the reality of the situation (though he gets close when in Pomfret Castle) instead after losing everything Richard experiences a deep and profound Identity Crisis, which sees him cut adrift, feeling isolated and lonely.

*Think: When does he come close to deciding what he did wrong? Does he ever realise, like the gardener did - what a king should do?
What evidence can you find in his soliloquy in Act 5 that he is suffering an indent crisis?*

Then he is murdered.

So your essay.

Begin by introducing the play and your line of thought.

It's always a good idea to start with the title and author.

Summarise what is going to come up in the essay.

Link it to some theme - something we learn/are forced to think about - that concerns the wider world (history, or humanity in general)

Then section one - deal with Act 1 and Act 2 sc1. (What I call a section may well be several paragraphs)

How are we made aware of Richard's faults? Who is the audience encouraged to side with? Explain that we dislike and are unsympathetic to Richard.

Discuss: the **text** of the play

The way the **action can be presented.**

Feel free to contrast (or name as examples) **various productions** you have seen.

In this essay it is worth going in to some detail on Act 2 sc1. Explain how York and Gaunt tell us the problems that lie in Richard's court. How we side with Gaunt at this point in the play how his anger is made righteous. (Repetition at the start of a clause or sentence is called **anaphora**, it's one of the key features of Gaunt's speech). Analyse some of his imagery and then discuss Richard's reaction.

Section two - make clear we are at a **turning point** in the essay.

(You can discuss how, after Richard exits the play, Shakespeare immediately starts to prepare us for a different view of him - Why does he include the scene with the Queen, and Bushy, Bagot and Green?)

Act 3 sc.2 Our immediate reaction to Richard arriving on the beach is still to dislike like him - see how he suggest others are ridiculing him. Then how the contrasting nature of the poetry shows us the change in Richard, how he becomes humble in our eyes and we feel sympathy.

Look through Act3 Sc.3 - Where do we feel sorry for Richard, find a few examples (either from his own behaviour and dialogue or because of the behaviour or dialogue of others).

Act 4 - Summaries, but focus in on what makes us feel sympathy. You can mention he is still self centred - there is still some of the waspish glib behaviour we saw in Act 1, but here when used against those in power we tend to forgive it (or depending on our view even side with Richard). Where do Bolingbroke's men cross a line? Where does Richard say that he feels like he is now nothing.

Act 5 - (if you want look at the scene with Richard and the Queen and explain briefly how this adds to our growing sympathy).

Go through the scene in Pomfret Castle - summarise and pick out one or two ways Shakespeare here shows us Richard is a sympathetic character, how we feel for him in his most tragic moments.