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THE STUDY

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S KING RICHARD  
THE SECOND

Studies of the Historical Plays of Shakespeare, No. 2

BY

H. A. DAVIDSON, M. A.

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 Author and editor of the Study-Guide Series, author of  
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# The Study of the Historical Plays of Shakespeare

H. A. DAVIDSON

This guide for the study of Shakespeare's historical plays is arranged for practical ends. No attempt has been made to specialize the study in any one direction. The aim is rather to secure intelligent reading and thorough familiarity with the text of the plays and at the same time to aid effectively in the study of the drama as a form of literary art.

The objects which have determined the selection and arrangement of topics for study may be summarized as follows:

It is intended to aid students, first, in reading with close attention, and in retaining, from scene to scene, the dramatic significance of all that has preceded, that, as the plot develops it may carry the imagination steadily forward to those complex crises of dramatic action in which many conflicting motives mingle.

Secondly, to aid in understanding the dramatic relation and significance of plot and counter-plot, of mingling tendencies and forces.

Thirdly, to aid readers in catching, in each scene and act the true significance of the characters that carry the action. In the dramas of Shakespeare interest always centers in the

action. Scenes are not arranged for the purpose of presenting characters, but characters are never mere lay figures brought together for the purpose of acting. Words and acts spring profoundly and intimately from what the persons are; acts seem to reveal depths and complexities of human nature such that the qualities of men and women predetermine events.

Fourthly, the topics for study are arranged for the purpose of leading students indirectly, but effectively, to an understanding of the principles of dramatic art as manifest in the writing and arrangement of plays.

Fifthly, little emphasis has been placed, in topics for study, upon reference work. A few books of reference have been suggested in the bibliography; these should be used constantly as aids, whenever the reader's familiarity with the vocabulary, syntax, or widely varied illustrative material in use in Shakespeare's day is insufficient for clear and full apprehension of the dramatist's meaning. A limited vocabulary, or unfamiliarity with the literary conceits and phrases of the Elizabethan period might easily deprive the reader of a just understanding of the text and, certainly, of appreciation of the rich play of fancy, the ready wit, and the glancing intelligence of the master mind of the period. The study of the language and the literary qualities of Shakespeare's text as an end, should be reserved for the class-room, or the seminar, in connection with an adequate library and under competent guidance.

Sixthly, no adequate study of the sources of Shakespeare's plays is possible apart from the resources of libraries. Such references to sources as are found in this Study-Guide are limited in scope and intended only for the illustration of the

dramatist's skill and method in adapting old material so that, in the result, the borrowed parts assume new and more significant meanings and contribute to a whole of high dramatic value. This topic, when pursued as an end by students of competent training and scholarship, is rich in the reward it offers.

The Arden edition of the text suggested for use, contains the material for an elementary study of Shakespeare's rhythm and lines. Further study of this topic is left to the initiative of individual students, or the guidance of instructors. Many subjects of special study, not touched upon in this guide, will suggest themselves to Shakespearean scholars, but they do not fall within the scope and purpose of this little book. For the most part, also, such subjects are profitable only for advanced students who need no other guide than the purpose in hand, and who are abundantly able to avail themselves of the ripe scholarship of those who have given years to the special topic that claims their interest.

It remains to say a word of apology for the mingling of the study of English history with the study of Shakespeare's plays. In a narrow sense, the student of the historical plays of Shakespeare has no concern with the period of English history in which the events of the play belong. He asks from what source Shakespeare drew his material and, when he has found the chronicle, or the earlier play, used by the dramatist, he directs his attention to the discovery of the selection and adaptation by which the new play was arranged. The Shakespearean scholar is, theoretically, impregnable in his position that we should inquire only for the contemporary historical source of



the characters and events used by the dramatist as the basis of the scenes and acts he imagined. In practice, this is usually interpreted narrowly and, as a result, attention is centered upon the Chronicle, or 'Lives,' or earlier play, from which the dramatist borrowed. This examination fails to reveal a most important element in Shakespeare's work, one, in truth, of greater significance than any single source of conversations, or scenes, or stage arrangement. Into his adaptations of old chronicle-plays or histories, Shakespeare infused something derived from no one of them,—a new relation of parts, a deeper understanding of political events, an interpretation of history as he knew it, that seems almost prophetic. To the question of how he came upon this wide comprehension of the meaning and trend of events extending over several generations, it is an easy answer to suggest the genius of the greatest dramatist the world has known, but a closer analysis shows that Shakespeare's special gifts lay, first, in his exceeding readiness and versatility in absorbing phases of the life, belief, and knowledge of his own generation; secondly, in his power of intellectual detachment from his own experiences so that he both shared the emotions and experiences of his fellow men, and also compared, related, and judged; and thirdly, in such gifts of mind or temperament that he unconsciously grasped the fundamental and permanent principles of dramatic art. The first of these qualities made him the great exponent of the minds and passions of all men in all ages; the second made him a practical student of political and historical events, and enabled him to interpret their meaning; the third, his supreme gift as a dramatist, enabled him to present the



rich fruitage of his mental activity in an art-form of permanent and living vitality. The result is that in his interpretation of history, in his understanding of men, or of times, Shakespeare often outruns his own historical knowledge. In *King Richard Second*, for instance, he seizes upon the great transitions taking place in that age and by a stroke of genius he relates them, both to the theories and practices of royal prerogative in the reigns of the Plantagenet kings of England, and to the rise of those forces that, long after, in the reigns of Henry VIII, and of Elizabeth, brought forth the new England of modern times.

Of all this, the student of Holinshed's *Chronicle* or of *The Troublesome Raigne*, or of Marlowe's *Edward Second*, learns little; but if, presently, he turn to modern histories and, by means of the best, inquires what the underground forces were that shaped the destinies of the English people between the time of King John and that of Richard Second, he will find later, on comparison, that Shakespeare has included in his play almost every one. The demands of the laborers, the far reaching results of the Black Death, the changes in industry, the rise of a commercial class, the passing of the power of the armed knight and the decay of the walled town, the new demands of the Commons, the attitude of the church, are all touched upon. To the careful student of history, the play seems to embody the complex elements of unrest that marked the age, while Richard and Hereford respectively stand for the earlier and the later conceptions of kingship in England. The critic and the historian seem to be writing from essentially similar points of view when Professor Hereford speaks

of "the political problem of the history—that struggle between legitimacy and aptitude which the nation so rapidly settled in favor of the latter," as the key note of the situation in the play, and the historian, Bishop Stubbs, in his discussion of the causes of Richard's downfall, uses these words, "Henry IV. coming to the throne as he did, made the validity of a parliamentary title indispensable to royalty; and Richard II., in vacating the throne, withdrew the theory, on which he had tried to act and by which he had been wrecked, of the supremacy of prerogative."<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare was familiar with the administration of affairs and the relation of classes in the age of Elizabeth and drew, at any moment, unconsciously, upon a fund of knowledge which could be paralleled in our time only by most thorough and painstaking study of the history, ideas, and political events of the age in which he lived. In a day when scenic presentation was a chief means of communicating ideas and information passed from group to group by word of mouth, it seems probable that the public may have been more familiar with the important events of national history than in the present age of many books. This common fund of knowledge, familiarly held in mind, Shakespeare counted upon in his audience, and it is precisely this background for the appreciation and enjoyment of the historical plays that the modern reader lacks. It seems certain, then, that such a study of history as will in a measure provide a substitute for this vital, sub-conscious familiarity of the men and women who first saw these plays with the present and the traditional past of their

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 269, chap. XVI., v. 2. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*.

own age, must contribute much to a better understanding of the dramas.

It is also frankly admitted that this guide is intended to serve a double purpose. Shakespeare's profound insight and his gift of interpretation suggest the wisdom of combining the study of his dramas with study of the history and times of which he wrote. For readers who seek culture and a better understanding of history and of literature, rather than special scholarship, the study, *pari-passu*, of literature and of the ages of which it is the most intimate, often the most reliable expression, is an incomparable means of attainment.

### THE STUDY OF THE DRAMA

Aristotle defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude." The definition, with modifications, will serve for other plays than tragedies. A drama must present an imitation of an action which is complete, well arranged, and of purport calculated to impress or interest. Aristotle's definitions are, historically, the sources from which our theories of dramatic art have been derived, and there is still no better beginning of study of the form and structure of the drama than parts of the *Poetics*. The following definitions, briefly quoted from Butcher's translation, are fundamental in an understanding of the principles of dramatic sequence and unity of action:

"A beginning is that which does not itself follow any thing by causal necessity, but after which something is or naturally comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity or in

the regular course of events, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to the type here described." \* \* \*

\* \* \* "The plot being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For that which may be present or absent without being perceived, is not an organic part of the whole."

The following suggestions are designed for the women of study clubs, readers, and isolated students who seek aid in critical study. Students working in classes with an instructor and having access to discussions of dramatic art should follow other methods, or use these suggestions as an adjunct to broader and more analytic work.

*After the preliminary study indicated for each play:*

I. For each act, fix firmly in mind the leading characters and note for each,—

- a. Name and relationship.
- b. Leading facts in the life of the person, if historical, antecedent to the beginning of the play.
- c. Character and role among comrades, antecedent to the beginning of the play.

Note.—The reader should become so familiar with these before entering on the study of the act that, in answer to the calling of names, she can make ready response with brief descriptions and character sketches.

II. At the beginning of each act, fix firmly in the mind



time and place, and for every act after the first, notice the time interval between the close of the previous act and the beginning of the next; ask (a) What is supposed to have occurred in this interval? (b) How is this interval managed, or accounted for, in the setting, or acting of the play?

III. At the conclusion of the reading or study of each act make a plot outline which will show,—

- a. By scenes, the purpose of each.
- b. The main purpose or subject of the act, as a division of the play.
- c. The beginning of the plot, if the act is the first; in later acts, the situation which serves as beginning of the act.
- d. The relation of each scene, in order, to the main purpose, or plot of the act; that is, the part, or step in the plot of the act fulfilled by the scene.
- e. In each act, the most significant moment, corresponding in a general way to climax in the play.
- f. The conclusion of the act.
- g. The threads of interest, or *unfinished sequelae*, at the conclusion of the act; these will be clues to follow, and a main source of interest in succeeding acts. The development of the *unfinished sequelae* will also be a test of the unity of the play and reveal the skill of the dramatist.

Note.—The “Topics for Study” for each act will guide to the selection of the true plot sequence, and the “General Topics” are arranged to give a similiar summary and critical estimate for the play as a whole.

The following brief statement of the theoretical organization of tragic drama is not intended to take the place of books

on this subject, or as a guide for special students. For readers who have no books on the theory of dramatic art, it will be an aid. Historical plays are not necessarily organized in the form of the tragic drama, but this type has so manifestly influenced the form and arrangement of all plays that the understanding of it is essential for study of dramatic structure in any of its varied forms.

*In the theoretical drama it is supposed:*

I. That in act 1 we should find an introduction to the main group of the *dramatis personae*, including the central figure or hero; a clear indication of essential facts such as time, place, and antecedent events necessary for understanding present action; the beginning of the plot, or dramatic action, and an indication of the problem, including some hint of every element working in this main plot toward an end.

II. That in act 2 the counter-plot should develop; that is, complications, difficulties, and dangers impending to thwart the action initiated in act 1 should be fully indicated, together with the *dramatis personae* among whom they originate.

III. That in act 3 we should have the bringing together of these two groups of persons, of these opposing plots, and a struggle of forces, not apparently decisive, but indicating with certainty to all except the participants the final result.

Note.—In a five-act tragedy, the climax is usually in the third act. It is not difficult to give a theoretical definition of the climax but the determination of the climax, or moment of finality, in a given action is often puzzling. Climax may be tested by the question whether every element of determining force in the result has yet come into full play; for, if new elements are still to enter, then the issue is not yet fully joined,—a moment still more doubtful may arrive, or reversal may take place; but if determining elements have not yet become effective, then the issue still hangs in the balance, and the



action has not yet come to a true climax. The term climax is often used for the dramatic scene in which the final issue is joined, for the moments of intense suspense preceding the arbitration of fate, but the true climax lies in the brief space of time that marks the final turning; before that breathless instant, diminishing effort still rests upon some unexhausted source of hope; after it, though battle rages and counter-plots arise, the end is sure, and when it comes, one looking back sees in what moment it was written down in the book of fate and realizes that since that time action has been no more than the subsidence of expended forces, the after results flowing from decisive acts or incidents.

IV. In act 4 the *dramatis personae*, often unaware, themselves, that the decision of fate has been reached, take heart of courage to renew the struggle. The on-looker, although he has understood the trend of events more clearly than those who take part in them, must still be almost persuaded when he sees the reviving courage and strength of the protagonists that they have yet a fighting chance. Upon this act depends, in great part, the high character of the tragedy in the end. The braver the effort, the more unsubdued the spirit, the better the muster against fate, the more pitiful the downfall which reveals the overwhelming odds, the predetermined event, the irremediable ruin.

V. The final act of the tragic drama returns, from its first moment, to the expectation of catastrophe with which the third act closed and is, in reality, the bringing to view of the ruin then wrought, in all its results.

#### NOTE-BOOK WORK

In the study of the drama the note-book is for the purpose of preserving for constant use outlines, tables, and references. Information found in books should be cross-referenced in the text of the plays, but collections of facts gathered from many

sources are more accessible and useful when organized in the form of brief outlines in note-books. The editor of the Arden edition of King John has included a most useful leaf from his own note-book, p. 143.—*Chronicle of the Reign of King John*.

To be useful, the note-book must be paged, and cross references to it placed in the text. Note-book work of a more extended kind should be required of students working in classes with the aid of special libraries and instruction.

#### A. PRELIMINARY TOPICS

I. A list of the Norman and Plantagenet Kings of England, with dates of reigns.

II. Genealogical tables arranged as in Green's Shorter History of England.

- a. Showing the descent of the Kings of England, from William I., to Henry IV.
- b. Of the family of Henry II., showing children, marriages, and descendants, as far as necessary, for the *dramatis personae* of these plays.
- c. Of the family of Edward III., in the same way.
- d. Of the family of John of Gaunt, showing the children of Blanche of Lancaster, and also the children of Katharine Swynford; that is, the family of the Beauforts.

III. Preliminary to the study of King Richard Second, make a chronicle of the important events of his reign similar to the one given in the Arden edition for the reign of John.

## IV. Biographical notes of characters:

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These are for historical characters found among the *dramatis personae* and are a means of securing that familiar acquaintance with them as individuals which is essential to imaginative reading of the drama.

V. In the text of King John, mark in each act all passages, which show the indebtedness of Shakespeare to the earlier play, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*. This will be preparation for the topics of Section IX, p. 43.

## B. TOPICS FOR THE STUDY OF THE PLAY

I. Keep, by acts, from stage directions, notes, etc., a time analysis, and statement of place, etc., for each act of each play. This may be kept in the text by noting at the beginning of each act:

- a. The date of the beginning, or the interval since the last act closed.
- b. The time of the act, as far as given.
- c. The place where the scenes are supposed to be. For instance, *Richard Second*, act 1. *Time*, April 28, 1398; *place*, Richard's palace, Windsor.

## II. Cross-referencing and annotating:

Essential facts which should be borne in mind may be added by note or reference, in the text; for instance, act 1, *Richard Second*, note in the margin for name of John of Gaunt..... *born in 1340*; note for King Richard, *act. 31 years*, etc. Whenever an item is found by searching, a reference to book and page should be added in the text, even if it be to the notes of the edition in use.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL TOPICS

The general topics for the study of the historical plays of Shakespeare have a double object. They are intended as a summary and review of the detailed study just concluded, and they should serve to emphasize the relation of parts, and give a broad view of the dramatic significance, power, and charm of the play. Topics for these purposes will be found in the first division of General Topics.

Critical study must derive its value from intimate knowledge of detail and close study of parts, but unless, after a time, the fragmentary results of such study are used in pursuit of some definite end as the basis of comparison, inference, conclusion, the student is little advanced intellectually, by all his toil. The second division of general topics is added for the use of students and classes having access to special libraries and time for extended and critical study. These topics are suitable either for written papers or for brief discussions in which carefully organized material gathered from previous reading and study is used as data. Topics requiring special library facilities may be omitted when these are lacking, or when the study of the plays is undertaken in clubs for purposes of general culture.

The topics suggested for critical study do not include even a small part of the many interesting subjects suggested by each one of Shakespeare's plays. A few have been selected which seem especially pertinent and fruitful. Others, it is hoped, may appear in later editions of *The Study of the Historical Plays of Shakespeare*; such are, The stage presentation



of the play in Shakespeare's time, Shakespeare's usage in verse, rime, etc. Study of the literary qualities of Shakespeare's plays in relation to the conceits, forms of expression, etc., of the age of Elizabeth. Topics for critical study of the dramatist's work as author, stage manager, etc., for study of the sources of his play, and for advanced study of the drama of Shakespeare in its great qualities have not been included; such study is, in its nature, comparative, and should be undertaken only after careful study of a considerable number of plays.

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## REFERENCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE\*

### REQUIRED BOOKS FOR THE STUDY OF RICHARD SECOND

Shakespeare, W. King Richard Second. Arden edition. Heath, 25c.

The Arden edition is chosen because the notes and introductions give especial attention to plot and dramatic arrangement.

Wendell, B. William Shakespeare. Scribner, \$1.75.

Warner, B. E. English History in Shakespeare's plays. Longmans, \$1.75.

Bateson, M. Mediaeval England. (Story of the Nations). Putnam, \$1.35.

Gairdner, J. The Houses of Lancaster and York. (Epochs of History). Scribner, \$1.

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\*Prices quoted are list prices. Libraries secure the usual discounts on these prices, and individuals can sometimes obtain reductions. Books not available through regular dealers are marked *Out of print*. These may be picked up second hand if not already in the library.

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BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

ENGLISH HISTORY

- Norgate, K. John Lackland. (Heroes of the nations) Putnam, \$1.50.
- Stubbs, W. The early Plantagenets. (Epochs of history) Scribner, \$1.
- Green, Mrs J. R. Henry the Second. (Twelve English statesmen) Macmillan, 75c.
- Maurice, C. E. Stephen Langton. (English popular leaders) King, 7s. 6d. (Out of print).
- Gairdner, J. & Spedding, J. Studies in English history. Douglas, 12s. (Out of print).  
For the chapters on the Lollards.
- Bright, J. F. English History. v. 1. Longmans, \$1.50.
- Green, Mrs J. R. English towns in the Fifteenth Century. 2v. Macmillan, \$5.
- Trevelyan, G. M. England in the age of Wycliffe. Longmans, \$4.
- Wylie, J. H. English history under Henry the Fourth. 4v. Longmans, \$20.  
For the trial and deposition of Richard II.
- Pearson, C. H. History of England during the early and middle ages. 2v. Bell, 30s. (Out of print).
- Stubbs, W. Constitutional history of England. 3v. Longmans, *each* \$2.60.  
For Richard II. v. 2. chap. 16-17.
- Ramsay, J. H. The Angevin empire. Macmillan, \$3.25.
- Stone, W. G. B. Shakespeare's Holinshed. Longmans, \$5. (Out of print).
- Hall, H. Court life under the Plantagenets. Dutton, \$2.50.
- Cutts, E. L. Scenes and characters of the Middle Ages. Virtue, 15s. (Out of print).
- Gardiner, S. R. Atlas of English history. Longmans, \$1.50.  
W. and A. K. Johnson's is the best and may be obtained in this country for a moderate price.
- Traill, H. D. & Mann, J. S. *ed.* Social England. 6v. Putnam, *each* \$5.  
For the England of Richard II. v. 2.



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LIFE AND TIMES OF SHAKESPEARE

- Lee, S. Life of Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.75.  
 Brandes, G. William Shakespeare, a critical study. Macmillan, \$2.60.  
 Wendell, B. William Shakespeare. Scribner, \$1.75.  
 Mabie, H. W. William Shakespeare, poet, dramatist and man. Macmillan, \$2.  
 Raleigh, W. A. Shakespeare. (English men of letter) Macmillan, 75c.  
 Bagehot, W. Shakespeare The Man. McClure, 50c.  
 Ward, H. S. & C. Shakespeare's town and times. Lane, \$3.  
 Ordish, T. F. Shakespeare's London. Macmillan, \$1.25.  
 Stephenson, H. T. Shakespeare's London. Holt, \$2.  
 Winter, W. Shakespeare's England. Macmillan, 75c.  
 Hales, J. W. The age of Shakespeare. Macmillan.  
 Warner, C. D. The people for whom Shakespeare wrote. Harper, \$1.25.  
 Creighton, M. Queen Elizabeth. (Epochs of history) Scribner, \$1.  
 Wheatley, H. B. The story of London. (Mediæval towns) Macmillan, \$1.75.  
 One of the best books on London at the time of the historical events represented in these plays.  
 Hall, H. Society in the Elizabethan Age. *Ed* 3. Dutton, \$2.50.  
 Ordish, T. F. Early London theaters. Macmillan, \$2.  
 Morley, H. English writers. v. 10. Cassell, \$1.50.  
 V. 10 contains Shakespeare and his time.  
 Lee, S. Stratford-on-Avon. New illus. ed. Lippincott, \$1.50.

THE DRAMATIC ART OF SHAKESPEARE

- Lounsbury, T. R. Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. Scribner, \$3.  
 — Text of Shakespeare. Scribner, \$2.  
 Moulton, R. G. Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. *Ed*. 3. Clarendon Press, \$1.90.  
 Bradley, A. C. Shakespearean tragedy. Macmillan, \$3.25.  
 Brink, B. ten. Five lectures on Shakespeare. Holt, \$1.25.

- Coleridge, ~~S. T. Lill~~ Lectures on Shakespeare. (Bohn's standard library) Macmillan, \$1.
- Ulrici, H. A. Shakespeare's dramatic art. 2v. Macmillan, each \$2.
- Smith, D. N. Eighteenth Century essayists on Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$3.  
Contains Morgahn's essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff.
- Snider, D. J. Shakespeare's histories. Sigma Pub. Co., \$1.50.
- Corson, H. An introduction to the study of Shakespeare. Heath, \$1.
- Hazlitt, W. Lectures on the age of Elizabeth and characters of Shakespeare's plays. (Bohn's standard libraries) Macmillan, \$1.
- Hudson, H. N. Shakespeare, his life, art, and characters. 2v. Ginn, \$4.
- Baker, G. P. The development of Shakespeare as a dramatist. Macmillan, \$1.75.
- Warner, B. E. Famous introductions to Shakespeare's plays. Dodd, \$2.50.

#### THEORY OF DRAMATIC ART

- Schelling, F. The English chronicle play. Macmillan, \$2.
- Freytag, G. The technique of the drama. Scott, \$1.50.
- Price, W. T. The technique of the drama. Brentano, \$1.50.
- Hennequin, A. The art of play writing. Houghton, \$1.25.
- Butcher, S. H. Aristotle's theory of poetry and fine art with a critical text and translation of the poetics. Ed. 3. Macmillan, \$4.

#### REFERENCE BOOKS

- Clarke, M. C. & C. C. The Shakespeare key. Scribner, \$7.50.
- Bartlett, J. Concordance to Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Abbott, E. A. Shakespearean grammar. New ed. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Schmidt, A. Shakespeare Lexicon. 2v. Lemcke, \$8.
- Dowden, E. Introduction to Shakespeare. Scribner, 75c.
- Fleming, W. H. How to study Shakespeare. 4v. Doubleday, each \$1.

- Corson, H. Introduction to the study of Shakespeare. Heath, \$1.
- Dyer, T. F. T. Folk-lore of Shakespeare. Harper, \$2.50.
- Barnard, F. P. Companion to English history in the middle ages. Clarendon Press, \$2.90.
- Oman, C. The art of war in the middle ages. Putnam, \$4.50.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Clarke, M. C. The girlhood of Shakespeare's heroines. Scribner, \$3.
- Rolfe, W. J. Shakespeare the boy. Harper, \$1.25.
- Black, C. W. Judith Shakespeare. Harper, \$1.25.
- Bennet, J. Master Skylark. Century, \$1.50.
- Abbey, E. A. Illustrations of Shakespeare's Richard Second. Harper's Magazine, v. 106, p. 505-511. (March, 1902).
- Abbey, E. A. Illustrations of Shakespeare's King John. Harper's Magazine, v. 106, p. 829-836. (May, 1902).
- Hewlett, M. Richard yea and nay. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Scott, W. Ivanhoe. Any good edition.  
For the character of King John.
- Jameson, A. B. Characteristics of women. Houghton, \$1.25.
- Lamb, C. & M. Tales from Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.  
Other good editions.
- Marlowe, C. Edward Second. (Temple dramatists) Macmillan, 45c.

Note:—This play is easily found. Its importance lies in the fact that Marlowe was the first to adapt the material found in chronicles, history-plays, etc., to the form of dramatic art. This play, probably produced in 1590, seems to be the model from which Shakespeare first learned his own greater art.

#### THE READING OF CRITICISM

Students are earnestly requested not to read discussions of the plot or structure of these plays or of the characters in them, until the conclusion of the work suggested in Topics for Study. After the student has become familiar with the

text of the play and has by study and comparison defined her own impressions of characters or plot, the reading of critical essays will suggest other opinions for comparison with those gained at first hand from the text. The reading of discussions of literature of which one is ignorant makes little impression on the mind, and succeeding opinions, if different, displace those first read, since the reader has no reliable means of judging between them.

# THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD SECOND

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## TOPICS FOR STUDY

### SECTION I. THE RISE OF THE COMMONS.

1. What was the composition of the great Council under the Norman Kings?
2. What powers did the great Council exercise under these kings?
3. a. When were knights and burgesses first summoned?  
b. Why were they called? Why did they object to attending?
4. a. What do you understand by a borough as a political division in England?  
b. To what in this country is it most nearly equivalent?  
c. Were all boroughs represented in the great Council? Who decided? How?
5. What was the business of parliament under the Edwards?
6. What new powers did parliament claim under the Edwards?
7. Where did parliament meet at this time? How often did it convene?
8. Who deposed Edward II? For what reason?



9. Had the act any special significance beyond the getting rid of a bad king?
10. a. What causes brought about the division of parliament into the House of Lords and the Commons?  
b. When did the actual division take place?
11. What was the composition of each house at the close of the reign of Edward III?
12. How were the powers actually exercised by parliament divided between the two houses?
13. For what reasons had the "Good Parliament" of 1376 been called? Why did it become famous?
14. Why is there no mention of the Commons in the play of *King John*?

## SECTION II. THE SOCIAL DISCONTENT.

15. In the 14th century, in England, what was the difference between the status of the "serf", and that of the "villain", or free laborer?
16. In what particulars did the introduction of "leases" change the status of laborers?
17. What was the law of "gavel kind", for inheritance, among tenants?
18. What was the effect of the "Black Death" of 1348 upon the labor class in England? Upon landlords?
19. What was the purpose in the statutes of laborers that followed? Did these statutes have the results expected?



*The Peasant Rising* [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)

## 20. Causes of discontent.

Note.—Divide causes into “a”, those fundamental and permanent in action ; “b”, those existing in temporary conditions, or in the minds of the peasants.

## 21. The leaders. (Topic for report.)

## 22. The complaints made;—did the peasants hit upon the real causes of their troubles?

## 23. Is there in literature any fairly adequate expression of the causes of unrest at this time?

## 24. The doctrines of the leaders:

A summary by points should be given.

## 25. The story of the rising in outline:—How was it brought to an end? What became of the leaders? What pledges were made? What was done, later, to fulfill these pledges?

## 26. What permanent and important results, if any, followed this rising? What is its significance in English history?

## 27. What elements of social discontent were centralized in the Lollard movement?

## 28. What had been the source of the Lollard doctrines and beliefs in England? How were they propagated?

## 29. THE LEADER OF THE LOLLARDS:

- a. His early life, character, and training.
- b. The secret of his influence.
- c. The doctrines that he preached.
- d. The old doctrines repudiated by him.
- e. The classes of people influenced.
- f. The political status and influence of the Lollards.

SECTION III. THE ENGLAND OF RICHARD SECOND.

30. What differences between the time of John and the time of Richard Second do you think most marked and important?
31. What important changes in the lives of the people were going on at the time when Richard became king? Give reasons for your decision as to movements of greatest significance?
33. PARLIAMENT:
  - a. What was the composition of parliament at this time?
  - b. What powers did it really exercise?
  - c. What powers, not approved by King and nobles, did it claim and try to exercise?
34. What was the relation of parliament to the nobles, as a class? To the people?
35. At what age was Richard crowned? Show by genealogical table his descent from William I.
36. How was the government administered during Richard's minority?
37. Of the men composing the Regency, who was ablest? How do you judge?
38. What officers of the government formed part of the King's household in this reign?
39. What were the sources of revenue in Richard's time? Who apportioned the revenues for military, naval, and civil services?
40. When, how, and why, did Richard take the government into his own hands?

## 41. RICHARD'S PLAN OF ABSOLUTE GOVERNMENT:

- a. How did he free himself from the control of parliament?
- b. How did he get rid of parliament itself?
- c. How did he manage the war party?
42. What classes of his subjects did Richard alienate? How?
43. In what lay Richard's strength, such as he had?

SECTION IV. THE BANISHMENT<sup>1</sup>

## ACT 1

44. When and where does the play open?
45. What indication of the theme, or artistic purpose of Richard II. do you find in the opening scenes?
46. What information about antecedent events is given the reader in act 1?

Note.—For Coleridge's analysis of the purpose and indications of first scenes, see his *Lectures on Shakespeare*, p. 346, Bohn's Standard Library edition.

47. Is this information sufficient for the complete understanding of the stage presentation, or did the author depend upon outside knowledge on the part of the audience? How do you determine?
48. What was the cause of the quarrel between Hereford and Mowbray? What charges did Hereford make?
49. What answer did Mowbray return to each of these accusations? Explain his reason for each answer.

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<sup>1</sup>For dates of historical events in scenes 1-4, see Wylie's *Henry the Fourth*, I. 1-6, Bright's *England*, v. I., and notes, Arden edition of the play.

50. Do you find evidence in Shakespeare's play of a secondary purpose on Hereford's part in this quarrel?
51. What did Shakespeare intend to show in Richard's part in scene 1?
52. In what points is the action of the plot advanced in scene 2, act 1?
53. What other purpose than the advancement of the plot did the dramatist wish to serve in scene 2?
54. What reasons had Richard for fearing Hereford?
55. Can you prove from Shakespeare's text whether Richard inclined to either side in the quarrel?
56. Why was Richard unwilling that the tourney should be fought?
57. Why did he make Hereford's sentence lighter than Mowbray's? Why did he shorten Hereford's term of exile?
58. What was Richard's motive for requiring the oath that Hereford and Norfolk would not make peace in banishment? Was it good policy to exact it? Give reasons for your opinion?
59. What was Shakespeare's purpose in the farewell words of Mowbray? Of Hereford? What is the most significant thing in Hereford's farewell? Why?
60. In scene 4, what do you learn about King Richard?
61. The character of King Richard as presented in act 1:
- What qualities had he which fitted him to rule?
  - What do you think the greatest weaknesses of his character?
  - Do you think these weaknesses due to education, circumstances, or inherent characteristics? Give reasons for your opinion.

- d. Was Richard vain? Had Richard any sense of a ruler's responsibility? Prove from the text.
- e. Is the reader more interested in Richard at the close of act 1, or in Hereford?
62. How long a time is occupied by the events represented in act 1?
63. What dangers to the crown have been revealed in act 1?
64. What is the climax of act 1?
65. What is the conclusion of act 1?
66. Show what each scene contributes to this conclusion.
67. There are two or more points in which the acting of the part in act 1 must depend upon the mental attitude, or secret knowledge, of the actor; what are they? What is your opinion now about the acting of these parts? Give stage directions.

## SECTION V. ACT II. THE UPRISING.

### ACT 2

68. The editor declares that lines 1-146, scene 1, disclose Shakespeare's point of view in writing the historical plays: what was the point of view?
69. What is the most important purpose of the dramatist in the death scene of John of Gaunt?
70. In what does scene 1, act 2, advance the plot?
71. What steps in the plot are revealed in scene 2, act 2? Why is the death of the Duchess of Gloucester mentioned? Why is the Queen introduced?



72. Why did Richard select York as regent? Was the choice wise or unwise? Answer by an analysis and discussion of York's character, and a consideration of the circumstances.
73. Compare York and Gaunt in:
- Ability in public affairs.
  - Nobility of purpose.
74. What do you consider the most important step in the plot in act 2? Why?
75. What instances and evidences of the King's misgovernment do you find in act 2? What was a "forced loan"?
76. What finally turned the scale in favor of Lancaster with the nobles?
77. What difficulties did York meet with as regent?
78. What were the arguments in his mind for remaining true to Richard?
79. What were the arguments in his mind for going over to Lancaster? What determined his decision?
80. a. What evidence do you find in answer to this question:—In Shakespeare's play, did Hereford return to England, in truth, to recover his estates, or did he seek the kingdom from the beginning?
- b. What misfortunes did the cause of Richard suffer in act 2? What was the cause of the final one?
81. What forecasts or signs of coming disaster do you find in act 2?
82. What do you learn about Richard from his bearing under misfortune?

83. Upon what does Shakespeare depend for exciting the reader's interest in King Richard?
84. How long a time is occupied in act 2? In how many places is the action carried on? Where are they in England? How far apart?
85. What is the situation of the plot at the close of act 3? In what does the suspense or interest center in the future acts?

## SECTION VI. THE CAPTURE

### ACT 3

86. Why is scene 1 made the introduction to the act in which the capture of King Richard is the chief business?
87. On what charges were these men condemned?

Note.—The four men condemned in this scene were the men who had raised the forced loans under privy seal for Richard, hence those against whom the anger of the populace was chiefly directed. Shakespeare is inspired with the finest dramatic sense when he makes Hereford charge them, as chiefest of their offences, with having misled a noble prince. Richard thus seems more sinned against than sinning, even in the moment when most entangled in his own errors.

88. What was Shakespeare's object in emphasizing, just at this point in the drama, their influence over King Richard?
89. What is the purpose of the reference to the queen, just here?
90. What qualities of Hereford as ruler are shown in this scene?
91. What was Richard's real situation at this moment? Show in what lay his real strength, or his weakness.

92. What were the grounds of the King's confidence when he landed from Ireland?
93. By what occurrences was this confidence taken from him? What was the effect upon his courage?
94. Why did Shakespeare represent Bolingbroke as demanding only his lineal rights, and the repeal of the sentence of banishment?
95. In scene 3, what reason does Shakespeare show for Richard's surrender? In the historical account how was Richard captured?
96. What was the dramatic reason in Shakespeare's mind for the suppression of this incident?
97. What is the effect of this suppression on:
- a. The climax in Richard's career?
  - b. The feeling of the reader toward Richard?
  - c. The position and character of Hereford?
98. In what is the real conclusion of act 3?
99. Why is scene 4 added? Is it effective for the purpose intended?
100. What is the chief weakness in Richard's character as Shakespeare presents him in act 3?
101. Does the reader despise Richard at the close of act 3? If yes, why? If not, why not?

## SECTION VII. THE DETHRONEMENT

### ACT 4

102. What is the artistic reason for placing the inquiry touching Gloucester's murder as the opening scene in act 4?

103. Is any conclusion arrived at?  
 104. What power deposed Richard? On what grounds did Hereford claim the right to succeed Richard? Who was the next heir to the throne by lineal descent?  
 105. What is the argument in Carlisle's plea for Richard? Why is this plea given here?  
 106. What historical event did Shakespeare indicate in the prophecy with which the plea closes?  
 107. What did Richard chiefly regret in resigning the crown?  
 108. What was the chief difference between Richard's idea of kingship and Hereford's?  
 109. Do you find any plot elements in act 4?  
 110. If you regard act 4 as a summary of the drama, thus far, what points in the act are of importance?  
 111. Review Richard's mistakes from the beginning of the play:—
- a. Which one was the greatest mistake of all?
  - b. Did any single mistake cost him his crown?
  - c. At what point in the play do you consider that the King had irretrievably lost his chance?
  - d. Of all in men and influences, on his side, when the play opens, which ones were still with him when he was captured?

Note.—For the suppression of the deposition scene in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, see the Arden edition of this play.

An admirable discussion and summary of the historical trial and deposition is given in Stubb's *Constitutional History of England*, v. 2., chap. 16. In Wylie's *Henry the Fourth* v. 1., p. 11, the charges are given in full, among them violations of laws passed by the Commons.

The resignation of the crown was a formal matter. At the demand of the earls who had received his promise, Richard in the tower exe-

cuted a deed of resignation in which he absolved his people from their oaths of fealty and renounced his own claim to royalty in every respect, saving only the rights of his successor.

When the parliament which had been summoned for the purpose met next day, the coronation oath was recited, and afterward thirty-three counts of accusation were formally made. The estates voted that Richard be deposed and sentence to that effect was read. Henry of Lancaster then came forward signing himself with the cross, and claimed the vacant throne, declaring his descent by right line from Henry III. The estates assented at once and he was led to the throne by the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York. Bishop Stubbs closes the narrative of the event with these significant words:

"Henry IV., coming to the throne as he did, made the validity of a parliamentary title indispensable to royalty; and Richard II., in vacating the throne, withdrew the theory on which he had tried to act, and by which he had been wrecked, of the supremacy of prerogative."

## SECTION VIII. THE DEATH OF RICHARD

### ACT 5

112. Why, in your opinion, does the character of the queen fail to excite sympathy, or interest?
113. What was York's real reason for denouncing his son?
114. Why is this treasonable plot introduced here? Is it in any way an essential part of the main dramatic action of the play?
115. The soliloquy of Richard:
  - a. What subjects most frequently occupied his thoughts in prison?
  - b. What was the chief source or suggestion of the thoughts that entered his mind?
  - c. Why is the music introduced?
  - d. Why is the groom brought in?



e. What is the artistic reason for the introduction of the soliloquy?

f. Has the soliloquy any relation to the dramatic action of the play?

116. What excuse did Bolingbroke find for the death of Richard?

117. Was Richard's death necessary for Bolingbroke's security?

Note.—The fullest and most reliable particulars of the trial and death of Richard are given in Wylie's *Henry the Fourth*, a book not always found in libraries. The historian gives three different stories, formerly current, of the manner of Richard's death. The reasons for doubting that he was slain by Exton, by order of Henry IV., immediately after the discovery of Aumerle's plot may be summarized as follows:

1. The oldest account of the deed was written by a Frenchman at a later date than that of the event.
2. This account contains errors in facts well known.
3. It was written with the avowed intention of stirring up hatred of Henry IV.
4. No mention of this story is found in any English chronicle before Caxton, who translates the Frenchman's account.
5. No mark of an axe was found on the skull of Richard Second.
6. Circumstantial evidence, chiefly entries on the Issue Roll of Exchequer, goes to show that Richard really died in January, 1400.

118. To what did Shakespeare attribute Richard's loss of his crown—to the crime of Gloucester's death; to practical ineptitude for government; or to an unfavorable combination of circumstances?

119. Has Shakespeare justified Bolingbroke in seizing the crown?

120. Did Bolingbroke justify himself? Prove from the text of the play.

## SECTION IX. GENERAL TOPICS.

### I. THE PLOT OF THE PLAY:

- a. What, at the conclusion of the play, do you find to be the real subject, or theme?
- b. What is the purpose and value of act 1 in the presentation of this subject, and in the development of plot?
- c. Show the relation of act 2 to the theme and to the plot which is its expression.
- d. Show the relation of act 3 to the theme of the play, and also its importance and position in the plot.
- e. Show the relation of act 4 to the theme, and the part it plays in the development of the action, between act 3 and act 4.
- f. In what lies the real beginning of the action, or plot, of this play?
- g. Where is the climax?
- h. Where is the conclusion?
- i. (1) Do you find in the last act, scenes or incidents unnecessary to the conclusion of the main plot?  
(2) Do you find incidents, or scenes which seem to point forward to another play?
- j. Wherein, chiefly, lies the dramatic interest of the play,—in the scenes? Or, in the characters? Or, in the development of the plot?

Answer from your personal experience with illustrations and reasons.

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k. On what did the dramatist depend, chiefly, for exciting the reader's sympathy with Richard, the king?

II. Coleridge says that *Richard Second* is the greatest of closet plays but not adapted for the stage. Discussion of the following questions will throw light on this critical opinion.

a. Is Richard an epic, or a dramatic hero?

Note.—Briefly, the epic hero seems to follow a predestined course to the end; the dramatic hero struggles against the fate that seems pressing upon him. In the discussions of Coleridge, Hazlitt, and others, abundant aid in defining the epic, or the dramatic hero will be found; afterwards, the character and role of Richard may be discussed.

(1) What events take place on the stage before the spectators?

(2) What events occur outside, or at a distance, and become known to the audience by results, or reports?

(3) What is the effect of either method upon the dramatic quality of the play?

c. Are the main questions handled in the play matters of popular concern and lively interest?

## SECTION X. GENERAL TOPICS

III. Again, Coleridge says, "Were there an actor capable of representing Richard, the part would delight me more than any other of Shakespeare's masterpieces."

- a. Make a character study of Richard, tracing him, [www.libgen.com.cn](http://www.libgen.com.cn) with note-book, throughout the play, and noting qualities attributed to him, and traits of character displayed in acts, speech, etc.
- b. Define for each act, the impression that Richard makes on the reader: note and account for changes of feeling toward the king.
- c. If a library is accessible, collect the opinions of critics of the character of Richard for comparison with your own work. See the discussions of Coleridge, Hazlett, Wendell, Brandes, Hereford (in the Arden edition of *Richard Second*), etc.

#### IV. The character of Hereford:

- a. Make from the play a character study of Hereford; as of Richard, above.
- b. Define his position at the opening of the play as to:
- (1) His hereditary possessions.
  - (2) His political affiliations, by training and family connection.
  - (3) His personal relations with Richard.
  - (4) The political affiliations sought by personal choice.
- c. Discuss the following question:  
Did Hereford come in good faith to recover his estates, and was he forced, after his arrival, to assume a bolder attitude and claim the crown? Or, was there a well organized plot of which he was cognizant before he landed?
- d. Define the role of Hereford in the play, act by act, noting the attitude of the audience toward him.

- e. Define Hereford's position and difficulties at the close of the play. Which of these lay in the situation? Which in his own character?
- f. Define and account for, if you can, Shakespeare's own conception of Hereford and his apparent fondness for this part.
- g. Is there evidence of an intentional contrast between the role of Richard, the King, and that of Hereford. Show from the play the basis of your conclusion, and if you find it, discuss the purpose and significance of the contrast.

See especially critical appreciation in Introduction of Arden edition of Richard Second.

- V. Study of Shakespeare's verse, diction, and of the literary qualities of the play may be undertaken when a library is accessible, by classes working under guidance of competent instructors. For classes studying alone, or without adequate library facilities, the study of literary qualities may be limited to familiarity with beautiful and noble passages, and elementary study of euphemism, imaginative comparison, illustrations of thought, etc.



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