

Richard III Character Descriptions



Queen Margaret Widow of King Henry VI, the king before Edward IV. Her husband, Henry VI, along with her children, were murdered by Richard's family. She hates Richard for the actions his family did to her and Richard's desire to destroy the house of Lancaster. In a highly charged scene, she curses the members of the House of York and its supporters for what they have done to her family.



Duchess of York Mother of King Edward IV, Clarence, and Richard, grandmother to Richard of York and Prince Edward. She is highly protective of Queen Elizabeth and her children. She curses Richard's actions throughout the play.



King Edward IV The King of England. He is Clarence and Richard's older brother, married to Queen Elizabeth, and father to Young Elizabeth, Prince Edward, and Richard of York. Initially involved in the scheme to overthrow the Lancasters, during his reign, he seeks peace between the two factions.



Clarence Also known as George, Duke of Clarence. The middle child between Edward IV and Richard. Richard disposes of him to ease personal access to the throne. He leaves behind his wife and two children, not mentioned in the play.



Richard Also known as the Duke of Gloucester. He is the youngest child with a passionate and villainous desire to become king. As Shakespeare wrote him, his deformed body represents his deformed soul. He manipulates each situation for personal political benefit; he will stop at nothing to gain the throne and rid England of the Lancaster regime.



Buckingham Richard's cousin and the ever-loyal accomplice to Richard's schemes. His characteristics often reflect those of Richard himself, but eventually, Buckingham reaches his limits on how far he will go to make Richard king.



Queen Elizabeth Also known as Lady Gray. She is the wife of King Edward IV and mother to Young Elizabeth, Prince Edward, and Richard of York. Richard views her as an enemy because she is the mother to three heirs of the throne, and she vocally objects to his rise to power.



Young Elizabeth Oldest child of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth and niece to Richard. She does not speak in the play but is utilized as a political pawn. She is married to Richmond after the events of the play for the political purpose of uniting the York and Lancaster houses.



Prince Edward Middle child of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth and nephew to Richard. He is the rightful heir to the throne after King Edward IV's death. Richard has him disposed of to gain easy access to the throne.



Richard of York Youngest child of King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth and nephew to Richard. Richard has him disposed of to gain easy access to the throne.



Dorset Son of Queen Elizabeth, from a previous marriage, and a member of Elizabeth's court. The only member of the Dorest-Rivers-Gray trio to survive Richard's schemes.



Rivers Brother of Queen Elizabeth, from a previous marriage, and a member of Elizabeth's court.



Grey Son of Queen Elizabeth, from a previous marriage, and a member of Elizabeth's court.



Lady Anne Widow of Prince Edward, son of King Henry VI and Queen Margaret. Anne despises Richard for the harm he has brought onto her family, but for political reasons, she is persuaded to marry him.



Rateliffe A close confidant to Richard and accomplice to his plan. He carries out the execution of Rivers, Gray, and Vaughn. He is not killed by Richard, but dies in the battle at the end of the play.



Catesby A close confidant to Richard and accomplice to his plan. He too is not killed by Richard, but dies in captivity after the battle at the end of the play.



Tyrrel The murderer Richard hires to carry out the deaths of Richard of York and Prince Edward. Tyrrell murders the two boys in the Tower of London.



Stanley Also known as the Earl of Derby. He is the step-father of Richmond. Carefully watched by Richard, he seeks to assist Richmond in regaining the throne for the house of Lancaster.



Richmond The foil to Richard, he represents everything Richard is not. He is a member of the Lancaster family and challenges Richard's ascension to the throne.



Hastings A lord in Edward IV's court. He trusts Richard to a degree, but also remains loyal to the dead king. He would prefer to see the young Prince Edward ascend to the throne. Richard eventually has him killed (via a false charge of treason) to ease his usurpation of the throne.



Brakenbury A close friend of Richard and Lieutenant of the Tower where Clarence and the young princes are killed. He follows the letter of the law. He is killed in the battle at the end of the play.



Lord Mayor of London A pawn in Richard's plot to become king.