

Writing about *King Richard III*

Essay question

How does Shakespeare use Richard's soliloquy to reveal more about his character?

Act 1 Scene 3, lines 326–343

GLOUCESTER I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have laid in darkness,
I do beweepe to many simple gulls
Namely, to Hastings, Derby, Buckingham;
And say it is the queen and her allies
That stir the king against the duke my brother.
Now, they believe it; and withal whet me
To be revenged on Rivers, Vaughan, Grey:
But then I sigh; and, with a piece of scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villany
With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ;
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

Enter two MURDERERS

But, soft! Here come my executioners.
How now, my hardy, stout resolved mates!
Are you now going to dispatch this deed?

FIRST
MURDERER We are, my lord; and come to have the warrant
That we may be admitted where he is.

Plan your essay

Work with the extract above and complete the table below as you explore your ideas.

Remember you can also refer to the characters, events and themes from the rest of the play as you write your response.

<p>What is your interpretation of this part of the play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening here and how does Shakespeare make this dramatic and interesting? • How does this contribute to plot development and your understanding of Richard's character? 	
<p>What strikes you about Shakespeare's language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vivid images or descriptions are used in this passage? E.G: And thus I clothe my naked villany, With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ; And seem a saint, when most I play the devil. • What is the relationship between Richard and the murderers? E.G: How now, my hardy, stout resolved mates! Are you now going to dispatch this deed? 	
<p>What strikes you about Shakespeare's dramatic craft?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might this part of the script be portrayed on stage? • What tone of voice, movement and gestures would you expect to see if this play was performed at the theatre? • What clues do you find in the passage to suggest how Richard might be portrayed on stage? E.G.: But then I sigh; and, with a piece of scripture, Tell them that God bids us do good for evil: And thus I clothe my naked villany... ... 	
<p>How does this passage compare to other parts of the play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe the way Shakespeare provides a dramatic experience for the audience as well as an interesting story? 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where else in the play does Shakespeare use soliloquys to reveal more about Richard's character? | |
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You will now have some concrete ideas that you can include in your essay. You might like to reorganise your ideas or add in other examples from the play to make a clearer plan. Use mind maps, bullet points or flow charts with words, images, sentences, thought bubbles and prompts that are intelligible to you. If you plan your essay or argument thoughtfully in detail before you begin writing, you will find that your ideas will be easier to structure and develop later.

Structure your essay

You will need to follow certain rules to give your writing a clear structure. Your essay should have:

- an **introduction** (with a clear sense of the direction in which your argument will go)
- a **main body** to develop your argument (with each paragraph making a point of dramatic or thematic significance, and referring in close detail to the script)
- a **conclusion** (that declares where your argument has arrived).

Write carefully

Your aim is to write clearly and concisely in the present tense and with sentences that are carefully punctuated. Remember to be specific in the points that you make about the play and the references you use from it, and in how you address the key points of the essay question.

Remember Shakespeare's skill as a playwright and poet

Shakespeare made specific choices about language and the dramatic representation of character, plot and theme on stage. Remember to identify some of the literary devices and dramatic techniques that he has used and explain their effectiveness. A good way to remember to do this is to make sure that you mention Shakespeare's name in every paragraph as you comment on the techniques that he is using.

Remember to use quotations and include analysis of the script

You will want to be a thoughtful reader of *King Richard III* so that you can explore the implications of words and ideas in the script. Your analysis should show that you are aware of metaphors, similes and other literary features, and that you consider the implications of genre, audience and context. Your close analysis of words and phrases from the script must be connected to the big issues raised by the play. Try to think in terms of relating your detailed analysis to the major ideas that the play explores.

Learn from others

Although you should endeavour to be as original as possible, your critical voice is inevitably going to be strongly influenced by others: your teacher, other members of your class and film versions, as well as the views of actors and critics. Learning from others adds to the effectiveness of your argument, it does not dilute it: but remember to give credit where it is due.