

Writing about *King Richard III*

Essay question

How does Shakespeare use Richard's soliloquy to make the end of this scene dramatic and interesting?

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 bewep 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 this relate to the rest of the play? • How will this scene affect the characters and events of the rest of the play? 	
<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? • What methods of manipulation does Richard use to control the people and events around him? <p>E.G: I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl. The secret mischiefs that I set abroad I lay unto the grievous charge of others.</p>	
<p>What strikes you about Shakespeare's dramatic craft?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might this scene be portrayed on stage? • How is the relationship between Richard and the audience influenced through this soliloquy? • What actions, tone of voice or gestures might be suggested in the language Richard uses? • What is the relationship between Richard and the people he uses? <p>E.G: How now, my hardy, stout resolved mates! Are you now going to dispatch this deed?</p>	
<p>How does this passage compare to other parts of the play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does Shakespeare provide a dramatic experience for the audience as well as the development of plot? 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ideas of kingship, power and evil are developed in this scene? | |
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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.