

# THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD III

Text by Judith Newmark, graphic by John D. Telford | ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

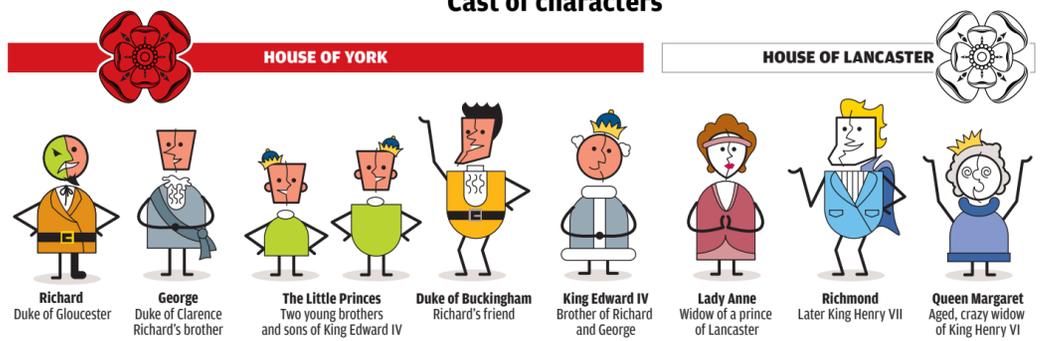
**T**wo branches of the royal Plantagenet house, the House of York and the House of Lancaster, spent more than a generation fighting with each other for control of the throne of England.

This episodic civil war (1455-1487) is often called the Wars of the Roses because of the family emblems: the red rose of York, the white rose of Lancaster.

In another time and place, the Plantagenets might have kept Jerry Springer booked for months. Will Shakespeare certainly appreciated their dramatic potential: the Wars of the Roses inspired eight of his plays.

The seething Plantagenets in "Richard III" bring the story to a close.

## Cast of characters



### ACT ONE

**R**ichard, duke of Gloucester, and his brothers would seem to be on top of the globe – well, the world. Their side of the Plantagenet family, the House of York, has won the most recent round in its long war against another branch of the family, the House of Lancaster. One brother rules, King Edward IV. But somebody warned the king to beware of the letter "G." Could that mean the third brother – George, duke of Clarence – wants the crown for himself? Who would say such a thing? And why won't somebody tell Edward that "Gloucester" also starts with a "G"?

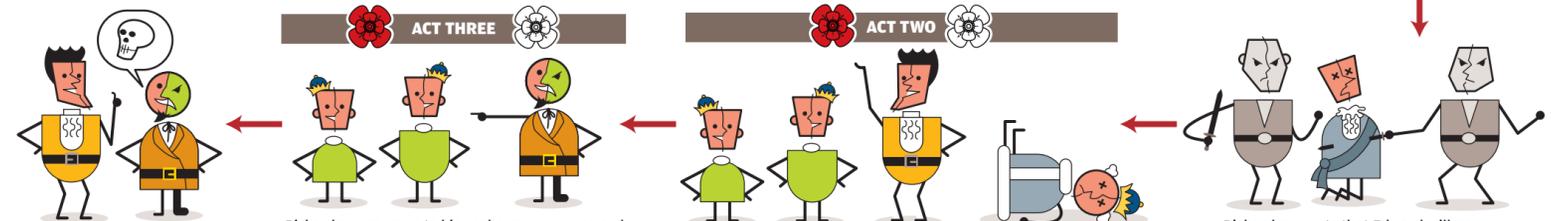


Clarence is packed off to the Tower of London while Richard – misshapen and unloved, brave and shrewd and charming – has his eye on the throne for himself. A queen would be a good first step. Look, here comes Lady Anne, following the coffin of her father-in-law, King Henry VI.

Richard killed Anne's father-in-law. For that matter, he also killed her husband. Richard says he did it all for her – so he could have her for himself! He hands her his sword and bares his bosom. Kill me, he tells her – kill me, or marry me.

Anne agrees to the marriage proposal! Henry's widow, crazy old Queen Margaret, is furious, but nothing can surprise her anymore, or shut her up. She unloads on Richard with both barrels.

### ACT TWO



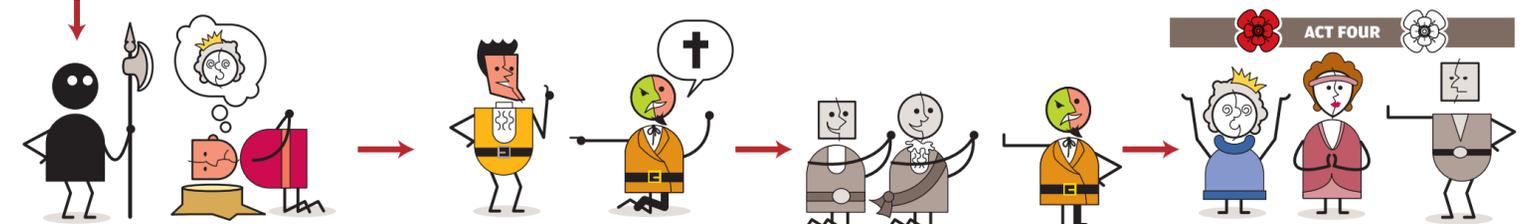
Richard tells Buckingham to get rid of Lord Hastings. He'll reward him generously later.

Richard seems warm to his nephews – so young and vulnerable! They have friends, such as Lord Hastings, but you just can't be too careful. The boys need someplace safe to stay. How about the Tower of London?

King Edward, already ill, feels so bad about Clarence's murder that he dies, too. The royal women mourn and curse Richard! Richard's friend, the Duke of Buckingham, sends for Edward's young sons.

Richard suspects that Edward will go easy on Clarence – and he's right. So Richard takes things into his own hands and hires a couple of killers.

### ACT THREE



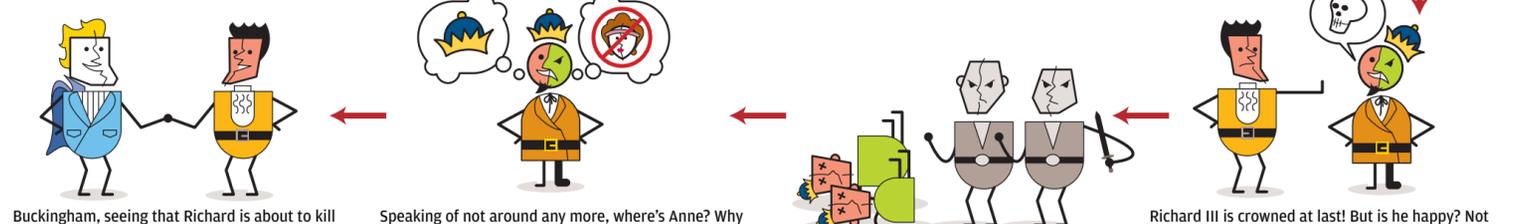
Trouble's brewing everywhere. Richard kills all who stand in his way, even men who thought they were his friends. Off to die, Hastings thinks of crazy old Margaret. She's been right about everything!

Now to deal with the young princes. Richard urges Buckingham to spread the word that they are illegitimate and not in line for the throne at all. In the meantime, he'll be praying and meditating.

Buckingham leads a crowd to Richard, begging him to be king. "No, no, 1,000 times no! ... well, if you insist."

The noblewomen try to visit the princes in the Tower, but no chance. Anne tells them Richard will kill her soon, and mourns her "angel husband" – the one Richard killed.

### ACT FOUR



Buckingham, seeing that Richard is about to kill him, heads off to join Henry, Earl of Richmond, who plans to attack Richard. Richmond belongs to the House of Lancaster.

Speaking of not around any more, where's Anne? Why is Richard telling everyone she's sick? He has his eye on someone who could do more to cement his claim to the throne. Perhaps Edward's daughter Elizabeth?

Anyhow, Buckingham can't stop Richard, who hires thugs to smother the boys in their sleep.

Richard III is crowned at last! But is he happy? Not while those pesky nephews are alive. Yet Buckingham doesn't leap at the idea of killing young boys. That's nice for the princes ... not so hot for Buckingham.

### ACT FIVE



Richard prepares to meet Richmond on Bosworth Field. When Buckingham is captured, he dies nobly.

The night before battle, Richmond and Richard dream of ghostly visitors: Clarence and Hastings and Buckingham, the little princes and Lady Anne. The ghosts reassure Richmond, promising victory. They aren't so friendly to Richard.

On Bosworth Field, Richmond and Richard fight boldly. Richard keeps fighting furiously even when his steed is killed beneath him. "A HORSE! A HORSE! MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE!" At last they meet in battle, man to man and king to king. Richmond slays Richard.

## IF YOU GO: SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

**Where:** Fine Arts Drive in Forest Park, northeast of the Art Museum  
**When:** Previews Wednesday and Thursday; opening Friday and running through June 15. Performances at 8 p.m., every night but Tuesdays.  
**How much:** Free; donations are welcome.  
**More info:** 314-531-9800; sfstl.com

**FESTIVAL TIPS**  
**Dress comfortably.** The festival performs outdoors. You might need a sweatshirt.  
**Come early.** The entertainment-packed Green Show – offering music, lectures, juggling, children's activities, even a short version of "Richard III" that explains the plot – starts at 6:30 p.m.

**Choose a place to sit** as soon as you arrive. Lots of people bring blankets or low-backed chairs for comfort. You can rent chairs, too.  
**Bring a picnic,** or put one together on the spot. You can buy food and drinks right there.  
**Leave Rover at home.** Dogs generally prefer edgy modern drama anyhow.



**THE END**

Richmond of Lancaster, soon to be crowned King Henry VII, pledges his troth to Elizabeth of York – Edward's daughter – at last uniting the Plantagenets in the red-and-white Tudor Rose. Their son will be King Henry VIII – and their granddaughter Shakespeare's own great monarch, Elizabeth Regina.

### PROOFING LOOP: RETURN TO GRAPHICS DESK

**ARTIST:** telford  
**MAC SLUG:** grex shakespeare Richard III FINAL  
**STORY SLUG:** xx  
**DATE/TIME:** 05.12.08 5:00 PM  
**SIZE:** NA

**PROOFING STAGE**  
 **FIRST PROOF** TO ORIGINATING TEAM  
 **UPDATED PROOF** TO ORIGINATING TEAM, COPY DESK  
 **FINAL PROOF** TO COPY DESK

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