

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

Contents:

- About Kings' Games
- The aim of the game
- What you'll need
- Playing the game
- The Table of Tableaux
- Further activities

About Kings' Games

Shakespeare's *Richard III* is all about the games kings play. It is a fast paced drama driven by one character's unquenchable thirst for power and the creative (and linguistic) genius he uses to attain it.

But Shakespeare's history plays can prove difficult for school students to follow. The history of English politics is complex, characters often have multiple names or titles and sometimes different characters share the same name.

Shakespeare's *Kings' Games* is a game-based approach to teaching and learning *Richard III* developed by Dr Kate Flaherty. It draws key moments of the play into five tableaux to embody the relationships between characters and to show Richard's tactics to win the throne, as well as the repercussions of his actions. In each tableau, Richard steps in and decides on an action that will further his ambitions. This makes for a fun and highly interactive experience of the play that simultaneously clarifies character relationships and plot.

The aim of the game

The aim of the game is for Richard, Duke of Gloucester, to get to the throne, by engaging with each of the tableaux and guessing (or following) the plot of the play. The educational aim of the game is for students to have a lot of fun acquiring an understanding of the character relationships and plot progression of *Richard III*.

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

What you'll need

- The Table (provided below)
- Large cards with character names written on one side and the Tableau to which each belongs written on the other. It might be best to make a full set of name cards for each Tableau.
- Key quotes stuck to the back of some character cards (optional)
- A class of around 10-20 high school students
- Open floor space
- A few chairs/desks for students to arrange
- A set of cardboard crowns, or other simple props (optional)

Playing the game

The five tableaux are listed in the Table along with Richard's key political manoeuvres in each act. The Table is your primary guide to setting up and running the game.

The game progresses more or less act-by-act. The teacher begins by explaining the game and then assigning characters (from Tableau 1) to students. Large name tags with character names can be hung around the students' necks to help clarify who is who.

1. A student is nominated to play Richard. The class decides as a group which symbolic gestures or actions will be used to represent the four key actions that Richard can choose from. He may *murder*, *muddy* (spoil relationships or reputations), *marry* or *make friends*. It can be a lot of fun just determining how these acts are symbolised: have students act out their suggestions.
2. Students create and refine their tableau (the teacher can decide how much help to provide the students as they create a tableau that shows the relationships between the characters). In each tableau, students can create relationships through looks, gestures, posture and positioning (for example, children at feet of parents; marriage via clasped hands; use of chairs as thrones; York and Lancaster signalled via white and red rose motifs).
3. Then Richard decides on the action s/he will take in order to get closer to the throne in accordance with the plotline of the play (as shown in the Table). He may perform multiple actions as he engages with any one tableau.

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

For example:

In Act 1, scene 1 (Tableau 2), Richard *makes friends* with Edward IV.

In Act 1, scene 2 (Tableau 2), Richard *marries* Anne.

In Act 3, scene 3 (Tableau 3), Richard *murders* Rivers and Gray.

In Act 3, scene 7 (Tableau 3), Richard *muddies* the princes by implying that they are illegitimate.

By identifying correctly which action Richard should take, and performing it, the students move through each tableau in the game, tracking the important plot points and also discovering more about Richard's character and tactics, as well as the collateral damage he causes along the way.

4. Once the student playing Richard has identified which tactic s/he will use the teacher may like to encourage the students in the tableau to change the tableau by demonstrating their reactions in some way. Enabling students to embody their characters' reactions will add to the students' understanding of the play, its characters, and how each action causes certain repercussions. The teacher can ask students to explain verbally why their character reacts in a certain way.
5. When you have finished using Tableau 1 to explore Richard's actions and the other characters' reactions, move on to setting up Tableau 2 (and so on). Experiment with allowing students to stay in a role or to exchange roles.

Use the Table as your guide for the actions that need to take place in each tableau. Skip subtler actions if you think them unimportant to the level of your students' understanding. Prompt students if they get stuck: 'Who besides Richard's brother Clarence is in line for the throne?' (The young princes). 'What should you do about them?' (Murder them). 'What might you do before that to cover your tracks?' (Make friends with them first).

If needed, the teacher can fill in the narrative between the students' correct guesses. Essentially, this game encourages students to discover the plot of the play themselves by 'playing' ambitious instinct. This exercise has been used successfully with students who had not yet read the play. With very little prompting they guessed correctly even the most subtle of Richard's manoeuvres. However, students will of course sometimes make incorrect guesses. Rather than simply correcting the student and providing the 'right' answer, teachers can use these moments for exploratory learning. By asking questions like, 'Why would you do it that

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

way?' or 'Why do you think Shakespeare has Richard III act differently?', teachers can encourage students to think more deeply about the 'gaming' in *Richard III*.

Another idea is to have the 'Murdered' characters sit/lie in a specified part of the room with their name cards still showing—giving a visual sense of Richard's 'body count'. The Queens who are 'retired' through loss of their husbands could be moved to a 'watching gallery' as commentators on the action. You might occasionally ask Margaret or Elizabeth 'How do *you* feel about this turn of events?' and explain that the play is full of commentaries from these observing figures.

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

THE TABLE OF TABLEAUX	
Tableau 1 <i>(before the play)</i>	King Henry VI (Lancaster) Queen Margaret Prince Edward (Lancaster) Lady Anne
Action	murders Edward Prince of Wales murders Henry VI
Tableau 2 <i>(the play opens)</i>	Margaret (retired) and Anne (retired) King Edward IV (York) Queen Elizabeth (Lancaster/York) Old Duchess of York (mother to Edward, George Clarence and Richard of Gloucester) George Duke of Clarence Hastings Buckingham Derby/Stanley Catesby

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

	Rivers Gray
Act 1.1	<p>makes friends with Edward IV (lines1, 2)</p> <p>makes friends with the audience</p> <p>makes friends with George, Duke of Clarence</p> <p>muddies Queen Elizabeth and her 'kindred'—Rivers and Gray</p>
Act 1.2	marries Anne (widow to Edward Prince of Wales whom he murdered)
Act 1.3	muddies Queen Elizabeth and her kindred (line127-)
Act 1.4	murders George Duke of Clarence (his brother)
Act 2.1	makes friends with Queen Elizabeth and her kindred (line 53-)
Act 2.2	Edward IV dies
Tableau 3 <i>(the final assault)</i>	<p>Margaret (retired) Elizabeth (retired)</p> <p>Anne (with Richard of Gloucester)</p>

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

	<p>Young Prince Edward</p> <p>Young Prince Richard</p> <p>Hastings</p> <p>Buckingham</p> <p>Derby/Stanley</p> <p>Catesby</p> <p>Rivers</p> <p>Gray</p>
Act 3.1	makes friends with Young Prince Edward and Young Prince Richard (his nephews)
Act 3.2	sifts Lord Hastings
Act 3.3	murders Queen Elizabeth's kindred—Lords Rivers and Gray
Act 3.4	murders Lord Hastings
Act 3.5	makes friends with the mayor

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

<p>Act 3.7</p>	<p>makes friends with the citizens</p> <p>muddies the young princes</p>
<p>Tableau 4</p> <p><i>(Richard as King)</i></p>	<p>Margaret (retired) Elizabeth (retired)</p> <p>Young Princess Elizabeth</p> <p>Richard III on throne</p> <p>Anne on throne</p> <p>Young Prince Edward</p> <p>Young Prince Richard</p> <p>Buckingham</p> <p>Derby/Stanley</p> <p>Catesby</p> <p>Henry Richmond (Lancaster)</p>
<p>Act 4.1</p>	<p>Becomes King</p>

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

Act 4.2-4.3	sifts Buckingham murders the young princes (4.2.80) (4.3.37) murders his wife Queen Anne (4.2.58) (4.3.38)
Act 4.4	(attempts to) marry Princess Elizabeth (his niece, daughter of Edward IV) (line 249-)
Act 5.1	murders Buckingham
Act 5.3	(attempts to) murder Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby's son--George
Act 5.4	Is killed by Henry Richmond/Henry VII
Tableau 5 <i>(the new regime—The Tudors)</i>	Henry VII (of Lancaster) Queen Elizabeth (of York) Henry VIII Queen Elizabeth I (for whom Shakespeare was writing)

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

Further activities

There are many ways in which teachers might choose to adapt, develop or expand Shakespeare's *Kings' Games*. We have included below some suggestions on how to modify the game as well as ways in which students can follow up on what they have learned through discussion, homework and assessment.

If you have any suggestions for adapting Shakespeare's *Kings' Games* or feedback on how it went, we'd love to hear from you!

Alterations and extra activities:

- Enrich the specific gestures that have been assigned to each of the four actions performed by Richard by adding keywords from the moment in the play that goes with the action. For example, he might *marry* Anne by the gesture of clasping her hand AND the words 'gentle Lady Anne' or 'Why dost thou spit at me?' or 'happiness forever' (all from Act 1, scene 2).
- Ask students to run through the whole sequence several times in 'fast motion': this reinforces the progression of events.
- Attach quotations to the back of some or all character cards so that characters can speak their own lines to dramatise the sequence. Eg. After attaining the throne, Richard says: 'Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,/And would have it suddenly performed.' Having students speak the lines of their characters at appropriate points will help to build ownership and understanding of their roles.
- You might take time to work on each speaker's performance of the spoken words—refining the sense of whom they are addressing and what they mean. This provides an avenue from plot into exploring the language of the play.
- Spread the five tableaux events over five classes. Begin each class with a tableau and the game, before moving to incorporate reading of key scenes to flesh out the dramatic context.
- Ask students to create a grand tableau/royal family tree.
- Ask a small team of students to use all the other students to design a grand tableau that reflects the action of the whole play.

Points for class discussion and homework options:

- What perspective does it give you on Richard to see him as a 'player'? What associations does the word have? Look for quotations in the play that suggest Richard is an actor/disguised/false etc.
- Set up the final tableau to prompt this discussion of acting, perhaps adding Shakespeare as a character. The play was written for Elizabeth I whose grandfather (Henry VII) is in the play. How might the context for which Shakespeare was writing have influenced how he writes about the character Richard?

Kings' Games – The Complete Guide

- Find an instance of each of the following actions in the play: *murder, marriage, muddying, making friends*. Write a paragraph on how the action is revealed through the language. Consider the following: Do we see the action take place on stage? Does it surprise us or do we see it coming? Does it surprise the characters involved? Is there a turning point in each scene where the outcome becomes inevitable? How artful/artistic/ingenious is Richard's action (consider especially his language and rhetoric)?
- Choose one of the following characters: Old Duchess of York (Richard's mother), Queen Elizabeth (wife of Edward IV), or Queen Margaret (wife of Henry VI). None of these characters is directly involved in the play's action but their perspectives on the action are important. Read the speeches given by your character and write a page about how their 'angle' influences ours as audience members.