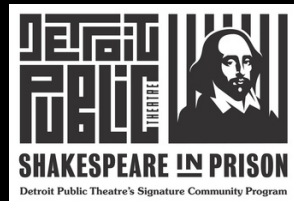


RICHARD II | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON
Detroit Public Theatre's Signature Community Program

King Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke were cousins; they grew up together. But after Richard became king, things got complicated.

The play opens with a crisis: Bolingbroke accuses Thomas Mowbray of treason in front of the entire royal court. Mowbray and Bolingbroke are about to whip out their swords and start a duel when Richard gets between them. The king banishes Mowbray for life... and banishes Bolingbroke for ten years! Bolingbroke is not happy about this outcome (although his father actually signs off on it), but he goes to France to serve his time. A short time later, Bolingbroke's father dies, and Richard writes Bolingbroke out of the will. Bolingbroke's response: That's it! This is war! He lands in England with a small army and claims that his cousin is a tyrant.

At first, Richard doesn't seem all that concerned. He's the king, after all. But then he starts getting bad news: all 20,000 of his Welsh soldiers have joined Bolingbroke. The news upsets Richard, but, it turns out, there's worse to come...

The Shakespeare

Enter *SIR STEPHEN SCROOP*

SCROOP
More health and happiness betide my liege
Than can my care-tuned tongue deliver him!

KING RICHARD II
Mine ear is open and my heart prepared;
The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold.
Say, is my kingdom lost? why, 'twas my care
And what loss is it to be rid of care?
Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?
Greater he shall not be; if he serve God,
We'll serve Him too and be his fellow so:
Revolt our subjects? that we cannot mend;
They break their faith to God as well as us:
Cry woe, destruction, ruin and decay:
The worst is death, and death will have his day.

SCROOP
Glad am I that your highness is so arm'd
To bear the tidings of calamity,
Like an unseasonable stormy day,
Which makes the silver rivers drown their shores,
As if the world were all dissolved to tears,
So high above his limits swells the rage
Of Bolingbroke, covering your fearful land
With hard bright steel and hearts harder than steel.
White-beards have arm'd their thin and hairless scalps
Against thy majesty; boys, with women's voices,
Strive to speak big and clap their female joints
In stiff unwieldy arms against thy crown:
The very beadsmen learn to bend their bows
Of double-fatal yew against thy state;
Yea, distaff-women manage rusty bills
Against thy seat: both young and old rebel,
And all goes worse than I have power to tell.

KING RICHARD II
Too well, too well thou tell'st a tale so ill.
Where is the Earl of Wiltshire? where is Bagot?
What is become of Bushy? where is Green?
That they have let the dangerous enemy
Measure our confines with such peaceful steps?
If we prevail, their heads shall pay for it:
I warrant they have made peace with Bolingbroke.

SCROOP
Peace have they made with him indeed, my lord.

KING RICHARD II
O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!
Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart!
Would they make peace? terrible hell make war

The Translation

SCROOP
I hope more health and happiness come to you, my lord, than my grief-stricken tongue can offer.

KING RICHARD II
My ears are open, and my heart is ready. The worst you can tell me about are losses for me here on earth. So, did I lose my kingdom? It was my problem, and what loss is it to be rid of a problem? Is Bolingbroke still trying to overthrow me? If he serves God, we will serve God, too, and then the two of us will be merely equals. Are our subjects revolting? We can't fix that. They break their faith with God as well as with us. Though you may cry out about woe, destruction, ruin, and decay, death is the worst fate of all, and the time for death will come.

SCROOP
I'm glad that your highness is prepared for the worst. Bolingbroke is bursting with rage and his army is attacking all across England. It's like an unexpected flood that makes it seem like the world is crying. Even old men with white beards have joined forces against your majesty, and young boys who still speak in high-pitched voices. The men whom we paid to pray for us are also now on their side, and women are fighting against you as well. Everything is going far worse for you than I can possibly describe.

KING RICHARD II
You are describing these horrible things too vividly. Where is the Earl of Wiltshire? Where is Bagot? What happened to Bushy? Where is Green? They didn't let the dangerous enemy cross over our territories without any opposition, did they? If we win, they'll pay for their failures with their heads. I'll bet they've made peace with Bolingbroke.

SCROOP
Oh, yes, they've made peace, my lord.

KING RICHARD II
Oh, they are villains and vipers, damned without any hope for redemption! They're like dogs that will suck up to anyone! They're three Judases, but each three times worse than

Upon their spotted souls for this offence!

SCROOP
Sweet love, I see, changing his property,
Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate:
Again uncure their souls; their peace is made
With heads, and not with hands; those whom you curse
Have felt the worst of death's destroying wound
And lie full low, grav'd in the hollow ground.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
Is Bushy, Green, and the Earl of Wiltshire dead?

SCROOP
Ay, all of them at Bristol lost their heads.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
Where is the duke my father with his power?

KING RICHARD II
No matter where; of comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs:
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
Let's choose executors and talk of wills:
And yet not so, for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:

How some have been deposed; some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poison'd by their wives; some sleeping kill'd:
All murder'd; for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable, and humour'd thus
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?

BISHOP OF CARLISLE
My lord, wise men ne'er sit and wail their woes,

Judas. I hope their guilty souls are punished for what they've done!

SCROOP
I see how your love turns into the deadliest of hatred. Please, take back your curses. Their peace wasn't made by joining forces with Bolingbroke. It was made with God, when they were executed. They are all in their graves now.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
Are Bushy, Green, and the Earl of Wiltshire dead?

SCROOP
Yes, they were all beheaded at Bristol.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
Where is my father with his army?

KING RICHARD II
It doesn't matter where he is. Let's not try to cheer ourselves up. We must talk about graves and worms and epitaphs. We'll make the dust our paper and use our tears to write a message of sorrow on the earth. Let's choose our executors and talk of wills. And, yet, what can we bequeath to anyone other than leaving our rotting bodies to the ground? Our lands and our lives now belong to Bolingbroke, and we can call nothing our own except for our deaths and that little patch of earth that will cover our buried bodies. For God's sake, let's sit on the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings, how some were overthrown and others killed in war. Some were haunted by the ghosts of the kings they had overthrown. Still others were poisoned by their wives, while others were killed in their sleep. All of them, however, were murdered. There is always death around kings, and there's no way to escape it. Death laughs at the king's reign and mocks his great ceremonies, allowing him to live a little while and play the monarch. Death fills him with pride as if the king's body were immortal, and at the end death comes and with little effort kills the body. Then goodbye, king! So stop treating me so respectfully. There's no need to pretend that I am any different than you. You've been wrong about me all this time. I feel all the same things that you do. I have desires and feel sad and need friends, just like you. How, then, can you say that I'm a king?

BISHOP OF CARLISLE
My lord, wise men never sit and feel sorry for themselves but try to fix the causes of their sorrow. Since fear weakens you, fearing your

But presently prevent the ways to wail.
To fear the foe, since fear oppreseth strength,
Gives in your weakness strength unto your foe,
And so your follies fight against yourself.
Fear and be slain; no worse can come to fight:
And fight and die is death destroying death;
Where fearing dying pays death servile breath.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
My father hath a power; inquire of him
And learn to make a body of a limb,

KING RICHARD II
Thou chidest mne well: proud Bolingbroke, I come
To change blows with thee for our day of doom.
This ague fit of fear is over-blown;
An easy task it is to win our own.
Say, Scroop, where lies our uncle with his power?
Speak sweetly, man, although thy looks be sour.

SCROOP
Men judge by the complexion of the sky
The state and inclination of the day:
So may you by my dull and heavy eye,
My tongue hath a heavier tale to say,
I play the torturer, by small and small
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken:
Your uncle York is join'd with Bolingbroke,
And all your northern castles yielded up,
And all your southern gentlemen in arms
Upon his party.

KING RICHARD II
Thou hast said enough.
Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
Of that sweet way I was in to despair!
What say you now? what comfort have we now?
By heaven, I'll hate him everlastingly
That bids me be of comfort any more.
Go to Flint castle: there I'll pine away.
A king, woe's slave, shall kingly woe obey.
That power I have, discharge; and let them go
To ear the land that hath some hope to grow.
For I have none: let no man speak again
To alter this, for counsel is but vain.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
My liege, one word.

KING RICHARD II
He does me double wrong
That wounds me with the flatteries of his tongue.
Discharge my followers: let them hence away.
From Richard's night to Bolingbroke's fair day,

Exeunt

enemy only works against you and helps your enemy. If you're scared, you'll die. That's the worst that can happen in battle. But fighting and dying is a way of beating death, because then you die nobly. But dying gives death the victory.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
My father has soldiers. Let's figure out where he is and make an army out of the men he has.

KING RICHARD II
Your scolding does me good. Proud Bolingbroke, I'll exchange blows with you on our day of destiny. My fit of fear has passed. It should be easy to get our men together. Scroop, where is my uncle with his men? Tell me good news, man, even though you look bad.

SIR STEPHEN SCROOP
Men often determine what the day is going to be like by looking at the sky, so you should know by my dull and gloomy eyes that I'm about to deliver bad news. I'm acting like a torturer, drawing out the pain of what I have to say. Your uncle York has joined forces with Bolingbroke. They have possession of all your northern castles now, and all your men of rank in the south are fighting for them, too.

KING RICHARD II
You have said enough. I curse you, cousin, for convincing me not to be sad anymore. What do you have to say now? What comforts us now? I swear to God, I will forever hate the man who tells me not to despair now. Go to Flint Castle. That's where I will wait. I am a king, but I am a slave of sorrow, and I will follow sorrow's orders. Tell my army that they may leave and go work for some cause that has hope, since I have none. I don't want to hear anyone trying to change my mind. Any advice is pointless.

DUKE OF AUMERLE
My lord, may I have a word?

KING RICHARD II
Any person who tells me about a silver lining will hurt me double. Let my army go. England will be Bolingbroke's very soon.

ALL ABOUT THAT VERSE, BOUT THAT VERSE*

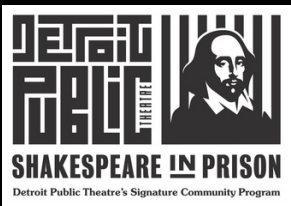


*and couplets.

*Richard II is an early-ish play in Shakespeare's career, so you won't find the wild experiments with poetry that are in *The Tempest*. But there's still plenty of fun to be had with verse!*

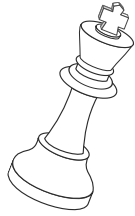
FOR INSTANCE:
There are only two times in this scene where two characters share a line of verse. Why do you think those lines are shared?

AND:
There are lots of rhyming couplets here (including some that rhymed in Shakespeare's English, like "again" and "vain"). Find the couplets. Why do those lines rhyme? What's the difference between just saying something and ending a speech with a couplet?



RICHARD II | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You can respond to these in any way you choose:



Write

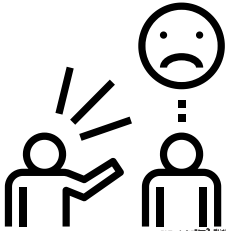
ACT IT OUT

Talk about it

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

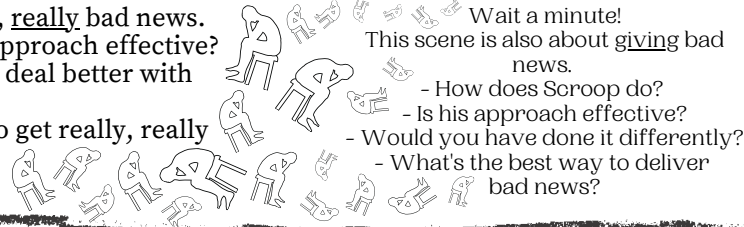
... up to you!



At its core, this is a scene about getting bad news. Like, really bad news.

- How does Richard deal with this bad news? Is his approach effective?
- Do you have any advice for Richard? How could he deal better with this news?
- Can you think of other Shakespeare characters who get really, really bad news?

How do they deal with it? Is that better or worse?



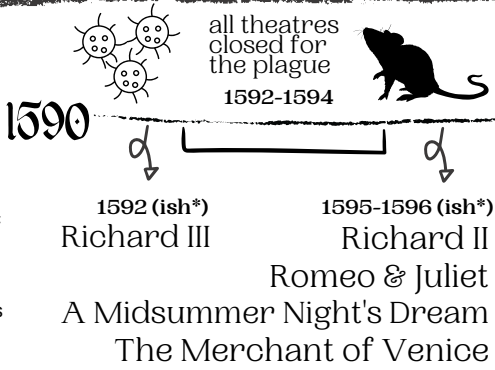
Wait a minute!

This scene is also about giving bad news.

- How does Scroop do?
- Is his approach effective?
- Would you have done it differently?
- What's the best way to deliver bad news?

Richard II

came out at about the same time as several of Shakespeare's most famous plays.



Theatres in England were closed for two years because of an outbreak of the plague. Apparently, Shakespeare was writing during that whole time, and writing well! The plays of 1595-1596 are usually considered his first "mature" plays.

We only had space to give you half of the scene. But take a look at what Richard says in the first half of the scene, before he started getting all of this bad news:

So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke, ...
 Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,
 His treasons will sit blushing in his face,
 Not able to endure the sight of day,
 But self-affrighted tremble at his sin.
 Not all the water in the rough rude sea
 Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.



Pretty confident, right? A minute or so later, he gets the bad news about the Welsh soldiers. He loses his confidence for a moment, but the Duke of Aumerle gives him a boost:

DUKE OF AUWERLE

Comfort, my liege; remember who you are.

KING RICHARD II

I had forgot myself; am I not king?
 Awake, thou coward majesty! thou sleepest.
 Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
 Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes
 At thy great glory. Look not to the ground,
 Ye favourites of a king: are we not high?



How do those earlier lines inform or change your understanding of Richard's "hollow crown" speech?

Can you remember a time when you felt overconfident because of who you thought you were—or the position you held?

You know how this story ends.

"I wasted time, and now doth time waste me"

Last year, we sent a pack (or two!) based on Richard's speech in Act Five. That was the end of the story. Richard winds up imprisoned at Pomfret Castle, waiting to be executed. Now you know the middle of Richard's story—the moment when he realizes that all is lost.

- What was Richard like at the beginning of the story, do you think?
- How would you represent his journey? (in a comic book, a drawing, a song, interpretive dance—whatever!!)

Many leaders in history have found themselves in Richard's position: alone, abandoned by their allies, their lives in danger. Here are a few real-life examples. Can you think of others?

Nicholas Romanov

The Romanov family ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917. In the middle of the First World War, Emperor Nicholas II faced a major crisis at home, which led up to the "February Revolution" in 1917. He stepped down and gave the government to a group of revolutionaries. Then he asked around to see if any country would take his family in, but everyone said "no." In the meantime, hard-line revolutionaries took power, and the Romanov family were executed.

Marwan II

Marwan took over the Umayyad Caliphate in 744, when the empire stretched from Portugal to India. Right then, the Abbasids were gathering an army in Persia. Rather than going right after Marwan, they started a multi-year propaganda war against Umayyad policies. By the time the Abbasids attacked in 747, they had convinced thousands of people to join their cause. With no allies, Marwan had to flee the capital and try to hide out in Egypt, where he was found and killed in 750.

Richard Nixon

After *Washington Post* reporters uncovered his illegal wiretapping and sabotage operations, Congress began investigating President Nixon. Republicans stood by the president until he fired two attorneys general who refused to interfere in the investigation. After that event, Congress began the impeachment process, and Nixon's allies started leaving him. On August 9, 1974, Nixon resigned and left the White House.



In the last pack, we looked at parts of one of Shakespeare's last plays (Prospero's journey to forgiveness). This time, we're looking at a play from Shakespeare's first big burst of creativity, fifteen years earlier.

Do you notice any differences in writing between *The Tempest* and *Richard II*?

Think about the meaning of the speeches, but also about the style, especially meter (where is the rhythm regular, and where does Shakespeare play around with it?).



I've made a huge mistake...



SURE DID