

Fall 2023

## THE WARS OF THE ROSES

### Richard III

**Synopsis:** Richard III is a singular charismatic monster; he both dominates the play and has seeped so far into the cultural consciousness as to surpass historical 'truth'. Shakespeare ingeniously structures the play as an unrelenting ascent to power followed by an equally steep decline in fortunes; Richard invites the audience into his confidence during the ascent so we feel deliciously complicit in his schemes and then stare in horror as it all goes south.

#### Discussion Topics:

- Richard III is extravagantly theatrical both in its structure and in how Richard is always playing the consummate actor, so much so he delights himself in how far he can push boundaries. How does Richard's theatricality and seeming transparency contribute to his charm with the audience?
- The last Plantagenet king will no doubt be portrayed negatively by historians (and the playwright) working during Elizabeth's reign; after all, Elizabeth's grandfather defeated Richard III to take the crown. Richard III's historical truth may be more complicated, and may never overcome Shakespeare's vivid portrayal. Who gets to decide what is historically accurate? Further, do we read history exclusively in terms of winner and loser, and does it matter?
- The women in Richard III are either dupes or scolds and mostly work in opposition to the title character. How do the women help define the title character and modulate the audience response to the character? Consider both their presence throughout the play and their significant absence at the end.

Folger Shakespeare Link: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/richard-iii/>

Carnegie-Stout Public Library also has paper copies of the play.

Kanopy BBC production link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/851091>

#### **Other resources to consider:**

*Richard III* film adaptation starring Laurence Olivier (1955)- library holding and

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/113189>

*Richard III* film adaptation starring Ian McKellan (1995)

*Looking for Richard* by Al Pacino (film, 1996)

*The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tay (novel, 1952) – library holding

*Shakespeare and Modern Culture* by Marjorie Gerber (book, 2008), Chapter 5 on Richard III

*The Lost King* (film, 2022) about finding Richard III's grave.

Carnegie-Stout Public Library also has many other books on Richard III, histories and historical fiction.

**Discussion: Dec. 3, 2023 @ 2 PM**

Carnegie-Stout Public Library 360 W 11th Street, Dubuque, IA