

SHAKESPEARE'S

WARS OF THE ROSES



Education Pack Northern Broadside © 2006

Introduction

This pack is designed as a useful aid to **Key Stages 3 & 4 English Literature, History, Drama, PHSE and Citizenship**. It accompanies the Northern BroadSides' workshops and gives a detailed insight into the 2006 touring production of *The Wars of the Roses* adapted and directed by Barrie Rutter. The purpose of the workshop is to provide some useful tools for looking at the plays. Whilst this workshop will not help directly to answer GCSE English questions it will hopefully provide ways of making the text and the show more interesting and accessible.

For more information on the process of production please refer to Stagework www.stagework.org a website resource containing a diary and interviews with cast and crew.

Wars of the Roses

This period of England's history (1455-1487) was rife with violence and treachery as the two leading houses of Plantagenet (York) and Lancaster, fought for the crown.

Shakespeare dealt with this period of history in two cycles; the first tetralogy (Henry VI I, II & III and Richard III) and the second tetralogy (Richard II, Henry IV I & II and Henry V). Shakespeare's history cycle started with the deposition of Richard II and followed the pattern of regicide up to Henry VII (Elizabeth I's grandfather). The pattern of war and bloodshed and the pendulous movement of power created an epic drama.

Sir Walter Scott was the first to coin the phrase "Wars of the Roses" to describe the war between the houses of York and Lancaster in his 1829 book *Anne of Geierstein*.

The Plantagenet monarchy preceded the Tudor dynasty, the period in which Shakespeare wrote. Therefore Shakespeare's history cycles have a very pro Tudor slant and were based on

sources that were biased in favour of the Tudors

Sources

Henry VI Parts I, II & III were mainly adapted from the histories *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587) by Raphael Hollinshed and from Edward Halles' *Union of The Two Noble and Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York* (1548). Shakespeare also referred to Robert Fabyan's *Chronicles of England and France* (1516) for Henry VI part I and for Richard III Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* (1513). For particular scenes he may have also referred to *The Mirror of Magistrates* and John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1583). The plays also demonstrate influences from Shakespeare's contemporaries Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe and classical influences from Seneca Roman tragedies.

Dates

The plays are often called **the first tetralogy** of the history plays. They were written out of chronological sequence (like the Star Wars film saga). The dates are still being contested, as the records of Phillip Henslowe (owner of The Rose Theatre) and the account by Thomas Nash (one of Shakespeare's contemporaries) are very vague.

The first cycle was probably written due to the success of *Henry VI part II* (or *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*) in 1590-91. He then wrote *Henry VI part III* (or *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry The Sixth*) in 1592 shortly followed by *Henry VI part I* (or *The First Part of Henry The Sixth*) in 1592. *Richard III* or *The Tragedy of King Richard III* the final in the sequence is estimated as being written in 1592-93.

Shakespeare's Time

William Shakespeare (1564 –1616) is now regarded as one of the world's great dramatists. He began his writing career in the late 1580's early 1590s writing poems and plays. The records are extremely

hazy of how he became involved with theatre, or even whether he started out as an actor. His first history cycle (Henry VI parts I, II & III and Richard III) really launched his career in 1592. It is generally thought these plays were staged at The Rose theatre owned by Phillip Henslowe and then possibly toured (due to the plague that closed London theatres in 1592). These plays were unlike anything seen before and very ambitious for such a young writer (he was 28 at the time). No

Tudor Century

- 1509 - Mary I born to Henry VIII & Catherine Aragon
- 1533 - Elizabeth I born to Henry VIII & Anne Boleyn
- 1536 - Mary and Elizabeth proclaimed illegitimate by Parliament
- 1537 - Edward VI born to Henry VIII & Jane Seymore
- 1546 - Henry VIII dies
Edward VI crowned
- 1553 - Edward VI dies
Lady Jane Grey proclaimed Queen for 10 days
Mary I proclaimed Queen
- 1554 - Lady Jane Grey executed
Elizabeth imprisoned in the Tower for 2 months
- 1558 - Mary I dies
Elizabeth I crowned
- 1567 - Mary Queen of Scots imprisoned
- 1587 - Mary Queen of Scots executed
- 1588 - The Spanish Armada
- 1592 - *The Rose Theatre opens*
- 1592/93 *Henry VI parts I, II & III staged*
- 1603 - Elizabeth I dies

one had staged a play based on English history and though Christopher Marlowe had written a prequel to his *Tamburlaine The Great* (1587-88), no one had written a cycle of plays on so epic a scale. They would have been very popular because of the contemporary relevance, namely the audience would know most of the stories depicted and also would probably have seen similarities in their recent history. They also depicted a great cross section of English characters from the nobility to the commoners. It was extremely popular and even stood up to the competition of the bear baiting and cock fighting that was performed in the local area surrounding

the theatre. A modern equivalent in subject matter and popularity of these plays would be the films of Quentin Tarantino and the Godfather trilogy with its blood, guts and gore content.

History/Propaganda

Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses plays were totally biased in favour of the reigning Tudors and certainly have to establish some Tudor myths. Historians and historical societies now largely contest these myths. Subsequent research and new historicism into the period reveal discrepancies and new information from other sources. In the last century the Richardians have emerged, a society who defend Richard III's reputation. Shakespeare, using his artistic licence, portrayed Richard III as a monstrous villain whereas historical evidence would imply the contrary. By following Tudor propaganda and portraying Richmond or Henry Tudor favourably in comparison to Richard III Shakespeare manoeuvred his way through censorship, which would have been fairly strict at the time. He would have also gained a favourable reputation and even possible support from Elizabeth I.

The plays encouraged a sense of nationalism and set a good example. They

Chat/Action point

How much can history be relied on as fact? Think about how myths and history is retold.

Play a game of Chinese whispers and see how much a phrase can change. Now imagine how a whole story or version of events can change.

Where do you think the line is between history and fiction?

Stage a debate between two political parties one for the Tudor dynasty one for the Plantagenet to see which is worthier to rule.

depicted the previous dynasty as rife with war, bloodshed, greed and treachery. Not only did the plays paint the previous dynasty negatively, they also set a contemporary example for the audience. That even though Elizabeth's reign was questionable (the problems with Mary Queen of Scots and her illegitimate status according to the Pope) it was better that this was left unchallenged, than throw the kingdom into yet another bloody civil war. It also demonstrated the different levels of dissension amongst the populace, the damage that had been caused, and could yet again ensue.

Modern politicians

Think about how much political parties and their media supporters slur the opposing party policies and actions. How spin-doctors manipulate public opinion.

Could you argue that Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses could be seen as the equivalent of modern party political broadcasts?

Do you think Shakespeare was a spin-doctor?

Think of the past advertising campaigns of the conservative and labour parties. What about the famous "devil eyed" Tony Blair or how Margaret Thatcher was labelled "the iron lady".



2001 Conserative Campaign 1

Synopsis

Barrie Rutter, artistic director of Northern Broadsides has adapted the four plays of *Henry VI Parts I, II, & III* and *Richard III* into three plays cutting rather than rewriting the texts. They focus on the actual Wars of the Roses, have a clearer narrative progression and focus on the kings themselves. Here are the synopses of his trilogy Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III.

Henry VI

King Henry V has died and a young Henry VI ascends the throne of England and various regions in France won by his father.

The young and inexperienced Henry faces great difficulties with his advisors and nobles, many of whom are involved in arguments and feuds with each other - notably between the factions of York and Lancaster.

The French attack Lord Talbot at the siege of Orleans and drive the English army towards the sea. However, the valiant Talbot manages to retake the city by night in a surprise attack.

In England, Richard Plantagenet (of the House of York) and the Duke of Somerset have a disagreement over a legal matter and ask others present to show their support for their respective positions: those supporting Richard pick a white rose, those who support Somerset pick a red one. Warwick accurately predicts that the argument, though begun over something small, will end in the deaths of thousands.

Richard seeks the counsel of his Uncle, Edward Mortimer, and becomes convinced that the throne more rightfully belongs to the House of York than Henry. He persuades Henry to restore his titles and is made Duke of York (hereafter referred to as York).

Back in France, Joan of Arc battles the English and drives them from Rouen. Henry appoints the bitter opponents York and Somerset to reinforce Talbot in battle.

Their bickering leads to a crucial delay in sending troops to France and Talbot dies when the much needed soldiers never arrive.

Meantime, the Duke of Gloucester - Uncle and protector to the King - is trying to set up a match between Henry and the daughter of a French lord in order to forge a peace between England and France. The Earl of Suffolk, however, persuades Henry to marry Margaret of Anjou hoping to use her to control the King.

Winchester – the ambitious leader of the Church - accuses Gloucester of wanting to be sole advisor to Henry, control him and eventually take over the kingdom. He grudgingly agrees to get along with Gloucester temporarily, but purchases the title of Cardinal, secretly swearing no-one will have more power in the kingdom than he.

England under Henry thus descends into chaos. He governs poorly and is unable to exert his authority as King. The Lancastrians plot to get rid of Gloucester (who is the next in line to the throne) and enlist the help of the ambitious Queen Margaret who wants to dominate the weak King. Gloucester's wife is lured into dabbling illegally in necromancy and is then arrested, to the embarrassment of her husband who is subsequently dismissed as Protector. Gloucester is then accused of treason, imprisoned and assassinated by agents of Suffolk and the Queen, leaving Henry to the wolves.

Meanwhile, York schemes to make himself King. He takes command of an army to suppress a revolt in Ireland and enlists former officer, Jack Cade, to lead a rebellion in his absence that threatens the whole kingdom. York's plan is to then return from Ireland and use his army to seize the throne.

Edward IV

The chaos continues as Cade stirs up rebellion. Speaking to his rogue army of commoners, he claims to be heir to the throne and defeats the English army.

Henry flees London as Cade attacks. However, once in London, his rabble army is persuaded to abandon Cade in favour of Henry. Cade flees and is subsequently killed, but Henry's troubles are not over as York's army moves in from Ireland.

York accuses Somerset of being a traitor and demands his imprisonment. Henry agrees but then goes back on his word. Furious, York pronounces Henry a weak King and declares himself the rightful heir to the throne. Somerset orders York's arrest. Salisbury and Warwick declare their allegiance to York. The court is divided and Henry agrees there is nothing left to do but fight. The Wars of the Roses between the Lancastrians and the Yorkists begins.

York defeats the English army and declares victory. He enters London. However, when confronted by Henry, he swears not to take the crown until Henry dies peacefully on the proviso that his family are named as rightful heirs to the throne. Queen Margaret is furious at her weak husband. Appalled, she heads for France with their disinherited son, Prince Edward, declaring war on the Yorkists. York's sons berate their father for not immediately taking the throne.

Richard convinces his father that his oath not to harm Henry is void because a magistrate wasn't present when sworn. York plans to go back on his word, attack Henry and take back the crown. However, Margaret returns with a French army and kills York at the Battle of Wakefield.

Warwick – a follower of York – believes that they, the Yorkists, can still win and Edward (the eldest), who has now become Duke of York following his father's death, can claim the crown. The two armies meet and the Yorkists win. Queen Margaret flees back to France with her son and Henry – who simply watched rather than fought in the battle - is captured and imprisoned. Edward, Duke of York, is proclaimed King Edward VI.

With Edward as King, his brother Richard (later Richard III) becomes Duke of Gloucester and George, his other brother, becomes Duke of Clarence.

Warwick goes to France to make arrangements for Edward to marry Lady Bona – the sister of the King of France – in order to forge an allegiance with the French. However, in his absence, Edward ill advisedly marries the widowed Lady Grey who becomes Queen. Warwick is so incensed at this that he changes sides and tells Margaret he wishes to help place Henry back on the throne. Many of Edward's followers are also unhappy with this marriage. His own brother, George, joins Margaret, whilst Richard stands by his brother, but only because he is plotting to overthrow Edward to claim the throne.

Warwick returns to England with an army from France, captures Edward and restores Henry to the throne. Helped by his brother Richard, Edward escapes to raise an army and reclaim the throne. Henry is imprisoned once more. Warwick, joined by another army brought by Margaret, engages Edward and Richard in battle in Coventry. Margaret's sons are killed. Richard returns to London and kills Henry. Edward is restored to the throne with Margaret exiled in France and Richard lying in wait to take the crown. However, Edward's wife has just given birth to a son, the future King Edward V of England. How will this impact on Richard's ambitions?

Richard III

After years of civil unrest between the royal houses of York and Lancaster, England enjoys a period of peace under King Edward IV. However, his brother Richard – Duke of Gloucester – resents Edward's power and the happiness of those around him. He continues to aspire secretly to the throne and decides to kill anyone he has to in order to become King.

Richard decides he needs a wife and manipulates Lady Anne - widow of Henry

VI's heir - to marry him, even though she knows he murdered her first husband. He has his older brother Clarence executed and shifts the burden of guilt onto his sick brother King Edward in order to accelerate his illness and death. The strategy works. On hearing of Clarence's murder, Edward dies. Richard takes on the role of Lord Protector and sends Edward's two sons to the Tower, supposedly for safe keeping to await coronation.

Edward's widow, Queen Elizabeth, mistrusts Richard and is proved right. Richard kills court noblemen who are loyal to the child princes including Lord Hastings, the lord chamberlain of England. He then has the boy's relatives on their mother's side arrested and executed. With Elizabeth and the princes now unprotected, Richard rallies his political allies, particularly Lord Buckingham, to campaign to have him crowned King.

The Duke of Buckingham becomes Richard's chief advisor and together they mastermind and manipulate Richard's accession to the throne. Richard promises Buckingham an earldom for his help but refuses to grant it when Buckingham won't kill the princes held in the Tower. After an easy manipulation of London's political leaders, an even simpler exploitation of the clergy and a clever planting of insinuations regarding the bastardy of Edward IV and his children, Richard ascends the throne. His first act as king is to kill his wife and send assassins to kill the two young princes in the Tower.

By this time, Richard's reign of terror has caused the common people of England to fear and loathe him and he has alienated nearly all the noblemen of the court. Richard learns that his most faithful ally, Buckingham, angered at the murders of the two princes and at Richard's false dealings with him, has fled to join the Lancastrian heir, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who is leading an army from France against Richard. Noblemen defect in droves to join Richmond.

Richard plans to marry young Elizabeth – the daughter of the former Queen Elizabeth and dead King Edward. However, Queen Elizabeth forestalls him and secretly promises her daughter to Richmond.

Richard now finds himself with few supporters and has alienated everyone around him. In one final ruthless act, he captures his former friend Buckingham and has him beheaded.

Richmond and his army arrive in England and the two armies camp close at Bosworth Field. The night before the Battle of Bosworth, the ghosts of his victims torment Richard in his dreams and tell him he will die.

The next day, Henry Tudor's forces defeat Richard's army. Henry slays Richard and claims the throne as Henry VII. Promising a new era of peace, he announces he will marry Elizabeth of York, thus uniting the white rose (the Yorkists) and the red rose (The Lancastrians) and commencing a mighty Tudor reign.

Northern Broadsides

The Wars of the Roses epic marks Northern Broadsides fifteenth anniversary, it is their largest scale production to date. A co production with West Yorkshire Playhouse, 21 actors play 97 parts and accompany the action with live music, composed by associate director Conrad Nelson. It marks a return to Richard III their first ever production in 1992.

History

Northern Broadsides is one of the country's leading exponents of classic drama – drama where it is the language that conjures the world of the play and enables the audience's imagination to take flight. One of the trademarks of a Northern Broadsides' production, therefore, is the use of minimal sets that create a pure theatrical space where the evocative language of classic drama can come to the fore.

Northern Broadsides trademark performance style is earthy, robust and energetic. The company is known for its vigorous and unpretentious approach to classic drama. Their work is of high quality and enduring appeal, performed with refreshing simplicity and a large dose of theatrical inventiveness.

In every Broadsides production, a cast of actors perform in the 'northern voice' - they speak in their natural voices rather than 'received pronunciation'. The impact on the audience is phenomenal as the directness of the northern voice makes the audience hear the words afresh.

Artistic Director, Barrie Rutter, is renowned for his clarity of interpretation and precision as a director, bringing a freshness and vitality to classic drama that is unparalleled, resulting in highly accessible productions.

Rutter's directorial style can be characterised by the stripping down of all the paraphernalia of theatre, taking it down to its bare essential so that the audience's imagination can run riot.

Audiences have constantly delighted in the exuberance and honest commitment of the actors which is infectious, generating an extraordinary and unparalleled rapport between the audience and the performers.

The company's aesthetic, as Rutter explained, was "*Northern voices, doing classical work in non-velvet spaces*". Wherever they performed, this radical new aesthetic excited the critics.

The first production, *Richard III*, took the company to a variety of unusual venues including the Marina Boatshed in Hull, West Yorkshire Transport Museum in Bradford and Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire. Since that first production, Northern Broadsides has continued to tour to unusual spaces across the world, for example - the Rose Garden in Chandigarh, India, a Roman amphitheatre in Austria (where they performed with live bears and lions on stage!), and the Tower of London!

The company's success has brought invitations from theatres and spaces nationwide. Northern Broadsides will perform anywhere from proscenium and in-the-round to castles, churches, cattle markets, train sheds, post-industrial mills and riding stables across the UK.

The company's home base remains in Halifax. Their performance and rehearsal space is a subterranean viaduct beneath the former Crossley's carpet mill. Renamed Dean Clough, this large old Victorian mill is now a thriving arts and enterprise centre owned by Sir Ernest Hall.

When Rutter first encountered the dark arches and rough hewn floors under Dean Clough, the space sparked his imagination. Where everyone saw a dank, dirty basement fit only for car-parking, Rutter saw a theatre. Christened The Viaduct, it has thrilled audiences and critics alike with its post-industrial character and unique atmosphere.

Now fifteen years on and over thirty productions later Northern Broadsides celebrates its fifteenth year by finishing what it started with the Wars of the Roses.

Style

“Northern Broadsides - a regional company with an international reputation.”

Northern Broadsides’ repertoire consists mainly of Shakespeare and classical texts. These plays possess a timeless resonance and their universal explorations of the human condition have currency in any day and age, appealing directly to the soul, the emotions and the imagination.

They have toured the UK and the world with their highly distinctive performance style, including Brazil, the USA, Greece, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Poland, Germany, Austria, India and Denmark. Barrie Rutter’s distinctive approach to theatre is fuelled by his passion for language and his unceasing celebration of the richness and muscularity of the Northern voice.

Northern Broadsides is a company of Northern actors who perform in their natural voices and have an indisputable command of the language and poetry of classic drama. The result is performance that has a directness and immediacy which is liberating and invigorating, breaking the southern stranglehold on classical performance and making the audience hear the words afresh.

Most recent Touring History

2005

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, UK Autumn Tour

COMEDY OF ERRORS by William Shakespeare and **SWEET WILLIAM**, a new commission by Alan Plater. UK Spring Tour.

2004

THE BELLS a new version of Leopold Lewis’s play by Deborah McAndrew, UK Autumn tour

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE by William Shakespeare UK Spring tour

2003

ANTIGONE (World Premiere) by Blake Morrison UK Autumn tour

HENRY V by Shakespeare/ **A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS** by Thomas Heywood UK Spring tour

2002

MACBETH by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour

2001

OEDIPUS (world premiere) & **THE CRACKED POT** by Blake Morrison UK Autumn Tour

THE MERRY WIVES & KING JOHN by William Shakespeare UK and Ireland Spring Tour

2000

ALCESTIS by Ted Hughes World Premiere UK Autumn Tour (Sept – Nov)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by William Shakespeare UK Tour and Germany

THE MILLENNIUM STORY: Two Plays from Tony Harrison’s *The Mysteries* UK Tour (Jan)

1999

KING LEAR by William Shakespeare UK Autumn Tour

TWELFTH NIGHT by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour

1998

TRACKERS OF OXYRHYNCHUS by Tony Harrison West Yorkshire Playhouse

SAMSON AGONISTES by John Milton The Viaduct, Halifax

RICHARD III by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour and Czech Republic

1997

THE PASSION by Tony Harrison the Viaduct, Halifax (Easter)

ROMEO AND JULIET and **ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA** by William Shakespeare UK Tour, Europe and USA (Feb – Nov)

1996

THE BLOOD OF DRACULA by Chris Bond Oldham and Halifax (Dec)

ROMEO AND JULIET and **ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA** by William Shakespeare UK Autumn Tour

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM by William Shakespeare UK Tour, The Globe, Germany, Shakespeare’s Globe, London and Brazil (June – Sept)

THE CRACKED POT - A Northern Broadsides/West Yorkshire Playhouse co-production of a Yorkshire comedy by Blake Morrison from Kleist’s *Der Zerbrochene Krug* UK Spring Tour

Themes

War/Conflict

War and Conflict are the obvious themes in Wars of the Roses. They appear in many guises. The plays examine the complexities of conflict, from the epic scale of civil and international war, to the small feuds and personal vendettas of people with and without power. This is drama that is still alive today; think of the blood feuds and vendettas that take place on television soap operas. The plays demonstrate the breadth of human nature and present a complex tale of characters in a gritty world in comparison to a simply medieval tale of good versus evil. By performing history Shakespeare explores human nature and politics to produce drama that observes motivations and effects. He explores the choices of key historical figures: the moral dilemmas, the conflicts of conscience within the characters, and the dualities of characters principles and ambitions.

Each war or conflict serves a number of purposes. Here is a breakdown of the key points of the conflict and their relevance for the audience.

International: the wars in France and Ireland.

The International wars in *Henry VI* point out the problems in England.

- John Talbot, the valiant general, is left stranded at the siege of Paris due the argument between York and Somerset over reinforcements.
- Henry VI weakness as a ruler in the fact that he gives key French provinces to his wife's father as a wedding gift despite receiving no dowry for her.
- His weakness further demonstrated with the loss of France in Edward IV. Henry VI reaction in comparison to York's demonstrates that he has no control or desire for control over the situation.
- The Irish rebellion demonstrates York's control of the situation in

the fact he is able to quell and keep English territory. It paints him favourably despite his openly plotting to take the crown.

- The demonstration of international war would have been extremely relevant to Shakespearean audiences, as Elizabeth I had defeated the invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Chat/Action Point

Can you think of any other historical or fictional characters that have been glorified or vilified by war?

What strengths and weaknesses did they demonstrate?

How do they compare to Shakespeare's characters?

National: the feud and the civil war between York and Lancaster.

The main subject: the wars of the roses, where an argument escalated into civil war.

- The conflict of nobles over position and title that leads them to take sides.
- The arrogance and pride, which inhibits compromise and agreement and further develops animosity and hatred.
- The wearing of the white and red rose that would become a point of honour.
- Warwick 's prediction that from the Temple garden argument many lives would be lost.
- The development into the repercussions of a feud into a war where fathers unknowingly kill their own sons and sons unwittingly kill their own fathers.
- The pitiful state of a country where a king can only weep sympathetically for the situation, but has no actual power to control his lords or his country.
- Parallels could be drawn from the

Chat/Action Point

Can you think of any other examples where allegiances inspire war and violence? Why not take a poll of the different football teams your class/friends support. Consider the causes of football hooliganism?

Tudor century of the dominance of religious faction – the Catholics versus the Protestants.

Rebellion/Class war: the uprising led by a commoner in pursuit of power.

It demonstrates the warping of ambition and ideals into pride and murder. It also shows the fickle nature of the mob and of power.

- Jack Cade, a commoner, incites the people into revolution against the Nobles.
- He declares that he is the rightful king and wins the people by decreeing the standardisation of large drinks.
- He declares war on the nobility and on the educated. He orders the death of a passing clerk.
- He loses his support when the nobility challenge the people's duty to the rightful king and country.
- It demonstrates again the weakened state of a country that can be overrun by a man and his popularity.
- It would have been very popular with the groundlings in the audience as a number of the characters in the Kentish uprising had a lot of comic potential.

Chat/Action Point

Pick out a key politician and a key celebrity; write down a list of pros and cons of why one should rule over the other.

Try staging a debate or press conference where one person plays the politician and the other a celebrity.

Examine the techniques and arguments they use to sway the public's point of view.

Personal: Ambitions, vendettas and emotional conflicts interplay in the wars of the roses.

The use of characters personal vendettas against each other to disfavour the other and win power.

- Winchester's plots against his half brother Gloucester, for power and position.
- Suffolk's and Margaret's defamation of York utilising a serving man's complaint to hinder York's command in France.

Revenge: Vengeance is one of the motivations for conflict and war.

- Young Clifford's revenge on the house of York for the death of his father. Declaring that he will kill anyone that bears the name of York, leading him to murder the innocent boy Rutland.
- The sons of York murdering of Clifford for the deaths of their brother and father.

Emotional: internal conflicts and opposing agendas occur throughout the plays. Characters incentives are thwarted through other characters actions, arguments and logic.

- Henry VI is caught between a rock and a hard place when he must choose between throwing the land into civil war or disinheriting his only son to York.
- There is also a great emotional battle demonstrated in particular Lady Anne who hates and yet is wooed by Richard III
- The internal battle of Richard III between his conscience and his will to dominate.
- All these personal vendettas, emotions and ambitions accentuated the drama of the action. They also worked as creating identifiable dilemmas which acted as examples to the audience.

Chat/Action Point

Look at Henry VI's action to avoid war by disinheriting his son or Lady Anne's acceptance of Richard III, did they have any other choices.

Discuss any alternatives and examine what repercussions may occur.

Imagine you are advisors or counsellors to King Henry VI or Lady Anne. What would you advise or suggest?

Performing History

Shakespeare was retelling history from a pro Tudor point of view, which paints the Plantagenet era negatively but did he have any other motives other than selling the show? Nowadays we can view his history plays in a variety of ways: showing the negative impact of war, commenting on human nature and also on politics and their effects.

In the last hundred years there has been a lot of further criticism on the relevancy for today's audience as well as Shakespeare's. It would certainly explain why there have been so many productions of Shakespeare's history plays post World War II. From Peter Hall's medieval metallic council tables in the sixties through Michael Bogdanov's political mirroring in the eighties up to Edward Hall's recent slaughterhouse. Whatever the framework/connection Wars of the Roses paints brilliant human characters and portrayals of human nature, politics and war are issues as relevant today as yesterday.

Characteristics (Human nature)

Shakespeare was ultimately a great dramatist and he was able to tell these epic stories through the characters strengths and weakness. In these plays, he was able to break away from the past structures of medieval morality plays where evil characters get their comeuppance and deal with characters that were neither solely good nor wholly evil. Therefore Shakespeare could not only progress the dramatic narrative but paint great dramatic characters.

- Henry VI is a weak king unable to govern his wife, his nobles or his people. He is essentially a good Christian King but flawed in his position that he is unable and disinterested in leadership. He has some very moving and beautifully lyrical speeches but lacks the strength to rule or govern.
- Richard Duke of York is an ambitious Lord wishing to claim his

Adapting Shakespeare & Authorship

Barrie Rutter has adapted the three Henry VI plays and Richard III so that they will fit into a trilogy that will work on tour and artistically that they focus on the actual wars of the roses. He is not the first to adapt or edit this sequence of plays. In 1681 Thomas Crowne adapted the plays into *Henry the Sixth the First Part, With the Murder of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester*. In 1817 JH Merivale production of *Richard Duke of York; the Contention of York and Lancaster* was staged starring Edmund Kean as Richard III. In the last century Peter Hall and John Barton adapted the tetralogy into *Wars of the Roses* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964. John Barton added around 1,400 mock Shakespearean dialogue to clarify and progress the narrative. In 1975 Barrie Rutter played Dick the Butcher in Terry Hands RSC production. Michael Bogdanov with the English Shakespeare Company toured his two part history cycle in 1987, with very contemporary references. More recently in 2000 Michael Boyd staged the Henry VI cycle for the RSC and in 2001/2002 Edward Hall and Propeller Theatre Company presented an all male adaptation called *Rose Rage*.

So, why all these adaptations? Part of the reasoning for adapting this cycle is practical: the cost, narrative clarity and progression, but there is also the argument that the authorship is uncertain. It is argued that the plays were collaborations rather than solely by Shakespeare. It is thought that there were two collaborators, which is why the phrasing and narrative are sometimes unclear. There was also an accusation made by Robert Green of plagiarism. He accused Shakespeare of being "A Tyger hart wrapped in a Players hyde". It is also argued that because the plays are his earlier and fairly rough work, is justifiable to adapt them.

***"My case for adaptation is based on my conviction that the plays do not work in unadapted form."* John Barton**

birth right as King. He plots and manoeuvres situations and people so that he can successfully claim and win the throne from Henry VI. However he also demonstrates weakness when taunted by Margaret and Clifford over the death of his youngest son Rutland.

- Humphrey Duke of Gloucester is a good advisor and loyal to the King but is naive to his wife's ambitions.
- Margaret who is adulterous, war like in her killing and mocking of York, also demonstrates her weakness when she begs for death after the murdering of her only son. Eventually she can only curse and berate others in Richard III.

Each of these characters illustrates the causes and effects of war, the glories and the miseries. Shakespeare manages to interweave these ambitious and devious characteristics into his grand finale *Richard III*. Richard is the epitome of ambition. He is willing to fight and kill his way to the throne even if it involves murdering his own brothers. He is remorseless and political in his ascent to the throne, his only real accomplice: the audience. His relationship with the audience though his Machiavellian

Chat/Action Point

Looking at the character of Richard III, examine how he is likable and detestable. Does he manipulate the audience like the other characters? Why does the audience enjoy watching him so much? Does he ever show remorse through the plays?

portrayal and soliloquy are the key to the drama. The character is also a brilliant vehicle for an actor, as Richard III is a great actor himself. He is able to manipulate and wield the body politic into power without a single battle or all out war. However maintaining power is all together more difficult than achieving it. Therefore Richard III has his own retribution with no remorse and the curses of his victims.

Politics

Throughout the Wars of the Roses, Shakespeare shows the power play or politics of history.

Power is only achieved through maintaining control of the body politic. He demonstrates this in a variety of

Shakespeare & Religion

Tudor England was a turbulent period religiously. It was religion that created the different contentions for the throne and threatened to throw the kingdom into another civil war. Henry VIII was excommunicated from Rome for divorcing his first wife, and mother to his first child Mary I. The kingdom became divided between Catholics and Protestants. Catholics continued to honour the marriage of Catherine of Aragon and viewed Henry VIII marriage to Anne Boleyn as invalid as Catherine was still alive. Meanwhile Henry VIII court became increasingly protestant so his children, Edward and Elizabeth were both raised protestant. On his death in 1546 Edward was seenunanimously was rightful heir. (Catherine of Aragon died in 1536 so the Catholic viewed Henry VIII marriage to Jane Seymour as legitimate.) However when Edward VI died young, the contention began. There were two heirs: the protestant heir, Lady Jane Grey, Edward's cousin and the catholic heir Mary I. Mary I ruled as a catholic monarch. She came to be known as "Bloody Mary" as she martyred a number of important protestant figures. When she died childless in 1558, there was yet another contention. Elizabeth was not recognised by the Catholics as legitimate (and she was protestant) they hoped to put her cousin Mary Queen of Scots on the throne. However Elizabeth was able to uncover the plot; imprison and execute Mary Queen of Scots.

Shakespeare writing in this Elizabethan period was consolidating the religion of the day. In Wars of the Roses religion and the church is viewed as greedy and corrupt. For example Winchester is able to buy his cardinal robes of office and is the first to openly plot to bring down Gloucester. Henry VI piety is also shown as weakness, his naivety and over reliance on the prayer book. In *Richard III* the church is also shown as corruptible as Richard III is able to manipulate it to his own ends.

different ways: through the control and allegiance of nobles in the Temple Garden scene; the wavering support of the rebellious commoners for Jack Cade in *Edward IV* and finally with the staged performance for the mayor in *Richard III*. Shakespeare demonstrates that the characters are only as strong as their supporters. For example Henry VI loses support from Gloucester and his nobles when he marries Margaret, he further loses power when he disinherits his son for the sake of peace. York wins the argument in the Temple scene and his challenge for the throne through the support of Warwick (or the kingmaker). However his son, Edward IV, loses power when he betrays Warwick's advice by marrying the Widow Grey. He only then triumphs through the support of his brothers. Richard III gains power through the support of Buckingham and kills all those who oppose him, which ultimately leaves him, unsupported and in want of a horse at the battle of Bosworth. This interdependency between supporters and power can also be translated to Shakespeare's period: that a ruler and their power are only as good as their nation of people and supporters.

Chat/Action Point

Take the words "body politic", "politic", "politics" and "political" discuss and try to guess the different definitions. Discuss your outcomes and compare to the dictionary. Now look for examples of these words in relation to Wars of the Roses. For example: does Richard III manipulate the body politic or politics?

Performing War

Northern Broadsides use different techniques to dramatise war: design, choreography and sound/music contribute to bringing war alive on stage.

Design

Jessica Worrall designed both the sets and the costumes on Wars of the Roses. She had to design the trilogy that would convey the drama and yet be effective for a touring company and fit into the Northern Broadsides aesthetic of maximum impact, minimum paraphernalia.

She was influenced by the medieval paintings by Bruegel, the contrasts between the dull neutral greys and browns and striking reds and whites. She was also interested in the notions of the fragility of power.

These ideas translate into her building site concept for the set of Wars of the Roses is utilised for all three plays and by the striking contrasts of colour in the costumes. The design had to work in harmony with the production that isn't time or period specific. The costumes are a hybrid mixture of medieval and modern, taking the simplicity of medieval shapes and fabrics whilst retaining a sense of modern dress and reference. The style progresses throughout the cycle culminating with Richard III in modern dress. The costume design had to convey the two factions both in peace and at war. The two factions wear different colour hoods during the battles which works to ultimate effect in the large battles were they could almost be two teams involved in an epic game.

For further information on Jessica Worrall's designs see Stage work.

Sound

For Wars of the Roses Associate Director and composer Conrad Nelson has created an original score. It progresses from the ensemble piece for Henry VI's Requiem for Henry V and the epic drumming battles of Edward IV to the finally drumming and clogging confrontation at the climax of Richard III. The use of music and sound performed live on stage and its capacity to awaken the imagination brings the epic battles and deaths to life on stage without the unnecessary effects of blood, guts and gore. For example deathblows are symbolised by a discordant blast of a saxophone, which effectively evokes an idea of painful steel.

Each battle receives a different rhythm and choreographed treatment to differentiate between one on one battle and larger confrontations.

Performing one to one Battle

Joan la Purcelle vs John Talbot
In *Henry VI* the French shepherd girl Joan defeats the mighty English general Lord Talbot. Northern Broad-sides signify these characters through music. Talbot comes on wheeled in on a trolley beating a large kettledrum whilst Joan literally dances around him accompanied by a light violin solo. Each strike is choreographed with a beat and signifies a hit. This method of stylised battle allows the drama to be conveyed without unnecessary fake blood or elaborate stage fighting.

Performing larger battles

The costume design enables two clear teams to be signified. The two sides use rhythm, repetition to signify the multiple hits of battle. They use clear gesture to imply the victors and the losers.

They also use choreography to highlight the conflict.

In one of the largest battles in *Edward IV*, they perform what is called "the card trick". The battle starts with two of each side playing a complex sequence of rhythms on carnival drums. This is further

dramatised as members of the company hold the four large carnival drums and turn whilst the combatants continue to drum. Eventually through this simple trick of rhythm and choreography the victors emerge. As the drums turn the red hooded drummer is replaced or defeated to reveal the final tableau: four white hooded victorious drummers and four kneeling defeated red hoods.

Choreography and Ensemble playing

Choreography also enables these large battle scenes to come alive on stage. In the final battle of Bosworth Field all 21 actors prepare for battle and clogging. Clogging is a technique that is used to accentuate the action and unify the cast together. They use different rhythms that are drummed and stamped to build the tension of the battle to the final climax of the death of Richard.

"The ensemble is the thing...the sheer dedication and drive of the company finally takes your breath away, pushing you to your feet come curtain call"

The Daily Telegraph



Choreographed battle between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians

Shakespearean Language

Blank verse is simply verse that doesn't necessarily rhyme. **Iambic pentameter** is a form of verse that was instantly recognisable to the Elizabethans and used by most dramatists of the day.

Iambic - from iambus: a rhythmic foot of stressed and unstressed syllables, **de-dum**.

Pentameter - from the Greek for **five** (Pentagon, pentangle) tells us how many feet are in each line.

De-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum. Each line consists of ten syllables, alternatively stressed.

"Now **is** the **winter of** our **discontent**
Made **glorious summer by** this **son of**
York."

Chat/Action Point

Compare Jack Cade's speech in *Edward IV*

Jack Cade

Be brave, then, for your captain is brave and vows reformation. There shall be in England seven halfpenny ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer. All the realm will be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass. And when I am king, as king I will be..."

with King Henry VI prophesy for Richmond or Henry Tudor.

King Henry IV

Come hither England's hope. If secret powers
Suggest but truth to my diving thoughts
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,
His hand to wield a sceptre and himself
Likely in time to bless a regal throne.
Make much of him my lords for this is he
Must help you more than you are hurt by me.

Both speeches occur in *Edward IV* but how different are they? Try reading out the speeches fast and slow, loud and soft and with and without accent. Which combination works better for each speech? Examine how the language effects how the speeches are spoken.

Shakespeare used iambic pentameter and blank verse to convey characters. Noble characters and romantic characters use the flowing rhythms of iambic pentameter whereas commoners use blank verse.

The closest thing we have to iambic pentameter today are limericks.

For example

There was a young man named Paul
Who went to a fancy dress ball
He thought that he'd risk it
And go as a biscuit
But got ate by a dog in the hall.

Northern Broadside speakers speak with northern accents. The hard granite stone consonants and short vowels of the northern voice are perfect for the rhythm and pulses of iambic pentameter. They also focus on the nouns rather than the verbs or adjectives, the words that tell the story rather than describe it.

Terminology

Iambic Pentameter The overwhelming majority of Shakespeare's verse is in so-called blank verse or "iambic pentameter." In this metrical scheme, each line breaks down into five pairs of syllables, with the stress on the second (de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**). The blank refers to the fact that lines are not rhymed. Shakespeare often experimented with the rules see Hamlet's "To **be** or **not** to **be** that **is** the **question**"

Soliloquy In plays, a solo speech, usually spoken by a character alone on stage. By convention, a soliloquy is addressed by the character to him-/herself, as if thinking out loud. This makes it an important way of revealing a character's thought and feelings, and providing clues as to his/her motivation. However a soliloquy can also be addressed directly to the audience, as in the opening speech of Richard III.

Aside Words spoken by a character when there are other people on stage but not meant to be heard by them – and thus addressed to the audience instead.

Folio A large-format book, usually prestigious and expensive, for which each sheet of printer's paper was folded in half to make two leaves (folium is Latin for "leaf"), or four pages.

Quarto a medium-sized book format, half the size of a Folio, in which each sheet of paper was folded twice to make four leaves (hence the name) or eight pages. When Shakespeare's works were printed during his lifetime, the portable quarto format was nearly always the one chosen.

Simile While resembling metaphor in its transfer of the meaning of one word to another, simile keeps the distinction between them at greater distance, often with the formula "like" or "as", which can then be followed by "so".

Metaphor Literally "transference" in Greek, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another, usually by way of comparison.

Morality play A variety of religious drama that was especially popular in Europe in the late medieval period. Morality plays had a simple Christian message, often dramatising the experience of a man

through temptation and sin (frequently personified by characters called, for example, "Vice" and "Pride") toward salvation.

New Historicism A critical movement spearheaded primarily by American academics, which seeks to distinguish itself from the "old" historicism practised by critics like E.M. W. Tillyard and Lily B. Campbell. New historicism often attempts to throw light on canonical literary texts by reading them alongside more unconventional ones, arguing that historical culture is itself formed by texts of all varieties, from travel reports and works of history to marginal jottings and books of accounts.

Machiavellian. adj cleverly deceitful and unscrupulous. Named after political philosopher.

Tetralogy A series of four related dramatic, operatic, or literary works

Richardians. A group of people believe that Shakespeare defamed the real historical Richard III.

Politic. Adjective. 1. wise or possibly advantageous: *I didn't feel it was politic to mention it.* 2. artful or shrewd: *a politic manager.* 3. crafty; cunning, *a politic old scoundrel.* 4. Archaic political (see also body politic)

Political. Adjective. 1. of state, government or public administration. 2. relating to or interested in politics *she was a very political person* 3. of the parties and the partisan aspects of politics: *the government blames political opponents for fanning unrest.* (politically = adverb).

Politics. noun. 1. (functioning as sing) the art and science of government 2. (functioning as plural) political opinions or sympathies: *his conservative politics.* 3. (functioning as plural) political activities or affairs: *party politics.* 4. (functioning as sing or plural) the business or profession of politics. 5. (functioning as sing or plural) any activity concerned with the acquisition of power: *the company politics are always vicious.*

Body politic. noun. The body politic the people of a nation or the nation itself considered as a political entity.

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Other resources

There are a number of films available of Richard III.

Richard III, directed and starring Laurence Olivier (1956) The film depicts a period portrayal of Shakespeare's play. It was made famous by Laurence Olivier's portrayal fake nose and all.

Richard III, directed by Richard Loncraine and adapted and starring Ian McKellen (1996) The film's concept is a hybrid period piece set in the early 1920's where Richard's government is portrayed as fascist.

Looking for Richard, directed, narrated and starring Al Pacino's (1996). The film explores the portrayal and implications of playing Richard III with insights and attitudes to Shakespeare.

For further historical resources, Bosworth Field in Leicester stages a battle re-enactment around the weekend of 22nd August. There is also a visitor centre and battlefield trail to examine the battle in-

depth. There are also a number of historical re-enactment societies that specialise on particular battles in the period.

Credits

All photos except Cover – Nobby Clark

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