Richard III, Act 2 scene 2

SCENE II. The palace. ( 9 parts)

Enter the DUCHESS OF YORK, with the two children of CLARENCE

BOY

Tell me, good grandam, is our father dead?

DUCHESS OF YORK

No, boy.

BOY

Why do you wring your hands, and beat your breast,

And cry 'O Clarence, my unhappy son!'

GIRL

Why do you look on us, and shake your head,

And call us wretches, orphans, castaways

If that our noble father be alive?

DUCHESS OF YORK

My pretty cousins, you mistake me much;

I do lament the sickness of the king.

As loath to lose him, not your father's death;

It were lost sorrow to wail one that's lost.

BOY

Then, grandam, you conclude that he is dead.

The king my uncle is to blame for this:

God will revenge it; whom I will importune

With daily prayers all to that effect.

GIRL

And so will I.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Peace, children, peace! the king doth love you well:

Incapable and shallow innocents,

You cannot guess who caused your father's death.

BOY

Grandam, we can; for my good uncle Gloucester

Told me, the king, provoked by the queen,

Devised impeachments to imprison him :

And when my uncle told me so, he wept,

And hugg'd me in his arm, and kindly kiss'd my cheek;

Bade me rely on him as on my father,

And he would love me dearly as his child.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Oh, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,

And with a virtuous vizard hide foul guile!

He is my son; yea, and therein my shame;

Yet from my dugs he drew not this deceit.

BOY

Think you my uncle did dissemble, grandam?

DUCHESS OF YORK

Ay, boy.

BOY

I cannot think it. Hark! what noise is this?

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, with her hair about her ears; RIVERS, and DORSET after her

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, who shall hinder me to wail and weep,

To chide my fortune, and torment myself?

I'll join with black despair against my soul,

And to myself become an enemy.

DUCHESS OF YORK

What means this scene of rude impatience?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To make an act of tragic violence:

Edward, my lord, your son, our king, is dead.

Why grow the branches now the root is wither'd?

Why wither not the leaves the sap being gone?

If you will live, lament; if die, be brief,

That our swift-winged souls may catch the king's;

Or, like obedient subjects, follow him

To his new kingdom of perpetual rest.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Ah, so much interest have I in thy sorrow

As I had title in thy noble husband!

I have bewept a worthy husband's death,

And lived by looking on his images:

But now two mirrors of his princely semblance

Are crack'd in pieces by malignant death,

And I for comfort have but one false glass,

Which grieves me when I see my shame in him.

Thou art a widow; yet thou art a mother,

And hast the comfort of thy children left thee:

But death hath snatch'd my husband from mine arms,

And pluck'd two crutches from my feeble limbs,

Edward and Clarence. O, what cause have I,

Thine being but a moiety of my grief,

To overgo thy plaints and drown thy cries!

BOY

Good aunt, you wept not for our father's death;

How can we aid you with our kindred tears?

GIRL

Our fatherless distress was left unmoan'd;

Your widow-dolour likewise be unwept!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Give me no help in lamentation;

I am not barren to bring forth complaints

All springs reduce their currents to mine eyes,

That I, being govern'd by the watery moon,

May send forth plenteous tears to drown the world!

Oh for my husband, for my dear lord Edward!

BOTH CHILDREN

Oh for our father, for our dear lord Clarence!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Alas for both, both mine, Edward and Clarence!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What stay had I but Edward? and he's gone.

CHILDREN

What stay had we but Clarence? and he's gone.

DUCHESS OF YORK

What stays had I but they? and they are gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Was never widow had so dear a loss!

CHILDREN

Were never orphans had so dear a loss!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Was never mother had so dear a loss!

Alas, I am the mother of these moans!

Their woes are parcell'd, mine are general.

She for an Edward weeps, and so do I;

I for a Clarence weep, so doth not she:

These babes for Clarence weep and so do I;

I for an Edward weep, so do not they:

Alas, you three, on me, threefold distress'd,

Pour all your tears! I am your sorrow's nurse,

And I will pamper it with lamentations.

DORSET

Comfort, dear mother: God is much displeased

That you take with unthankfulness, his doing:

In common worldly things, 'tis call'd ungrateful,

With dull unwilligness to repay a debt

Which with a bounteous hand was kindly lent;

Much more to be thus opposite with heaven,

For it requires the royal debt it lent you.

RIVERS

Madam, bethink you, like a careful mother,

Of the young prince your son: send straight for him

Let him be crown'd; in him your comfort lives:

Drown desperate sorrow in dead Edward's grave,

And plant your joys in living Edward's throne.

Enter GLOUCESTER, BUCKINGHAM, DERBY, HASTINGS, and RATCLIFF

GLOUCESTER

Madam, have comfort: all of us have cause

To wail the dimming of our shining star;

But none can cure their harms by wailing them.

Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy;

I did not see your grace: humbly on my knee

I crave your blessing.

DUCHESS OF YORK

God bless thee; and put meekness in thy mind,

Love, charity, obedience, and true duty!

GLOUCESTER

[Aside] Amen; and make me die a good old man!

That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing:

I marvel why her grace did leave it out.

BUCKINGHAM

You cloudy princes and heart-sorrowing peers,

That bear this mutual heavy load of moan,

Now cheer each other in each other's love

Though we have spent our harvest of this king,

We are to reap the harvest of his son.

The broken rancour of your high-swoln hearts,

But lately splinter'd, knit, and join'd together,

Must gently be preserved, cherish'd, and kept:

Me seemeth good, that, with some little train,

Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fetch'd

Hither to London, to be crown'd our king.

RIVERS

Why with some little train, my Lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

Marry, my lord, lest, by a multitude,

The new-heal'd wound of malice should break out,

Which would be so much the more dangerous

By how much the estate is green and yet ungovern'd:

Where every horse bears his commanding rein,

And may direct his course as please himself,

As well the fear of harm, as harm apparent,

In my opinion, ought to be prevented.

GLOUCESTER

I hope the king made peace with all of us

And the compact is firm and true in me.

RIVERS

And so in me; and so, I think, in all:

Yet, since it is but green, it should be put

To no apparent likelihood of breach,

Which haply by much company might be urged:

Therefore I say with noble Buckingham,

That it is meet so few should fetch the prince.

HASTINGS

And so say I.

GLOUCESTER

Then be it so; and go we to determine

Who they shall be that straight shall post to Ludlow.

Madam, and you, my mother, will you go

To give your censures in this weighty business?

QUEEN ELIZABETH DUCHESS OF YORK

With all our hearts.

Exeunt all but BUCKINGHAM and GLOUCESTER

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, whoever journeys to the Prince,

For God's sake, let not us two be behind;

For, by the way, I'll sort occasion,

As index to the story we late talk'd of,

To part the queen's proud kindred from the king.

GLOUCESTER

My other self, my counsel's consistory,

My oracle, my prophet! My dear cousin,

I, like a child, will go by thy direction.

Towards Ludlow then, for we'll not stay behind.

Exeunt

Promptbook Questions: Three groups; three sections of the scene

1. Where does the action take place?
2. Who is speaking to whom?
3. What happens in this passage?
4. Where should the characters be positioned on stage? From where and to where are entrances and exits made? Why?
5. What props are required by the passage?
6. Especially important are questions about the characters:
	1. What motivates these characters to say what they say?
	2. Do the characters’ objectives change in this passage? If so, when and why? Or do only tactics change? What obstacles stand in each character’s why? What happens when objectives meet obstacles?
	3. Where would you place vocal pauses?
	4. In what tone of voice is each set of lines spoken? Why?
	5. How would the characters move here? What facial expressions might accompany the delivery of this line?



