

ENGLISH ADVANCED: *KING RICHARD III/LOOKING FOR RICHARD*

Good morning teachers and fellow students. Today we are exploring connections between Shakespeare's *King Richard III* and Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*. The following questions that I will attempt to answer are the following: Are there any similarities between the film and the play? Are there any differences? Has the context of both texts and values changed over time? Well, I am here to answer all these questions for you all in dealing with Clarence's murder in both texts. In doing so, this will shape our understanding of both texts.

Shakespeare's *King Richard III* is a tragedy and morality play that was available to all classes of society in Elizabethan England which dealt with the events of England's historical past such as the War of The Roses. By contrast, *Looking for Richard* is a docudrama that was filmed and produced in the 90's by Hollywood actor and director, Al Pacino, whose purpose was to "communicate how he feels about Shakespeare" to a postmodern audience who finds the production of Shakespeare plays "boring." In *Looking for Richard*, Al Pacino and Frederic Kimball attempt to capture the right setting to enhance the terror and torment of the scene where Clarence is in prison. Frederic Kimball suggests to shoot Clarence's scene outside a dump due to the texture of the wall and the pigeon feathers. Does the location actually depict a place where Clarence is in prison? According to Pacino, "it doesn't work" and stresses that there needs to be a place "where Clarence is held prisoner." Due to this, Kimball suggests to shoot Clarence's scene at the tower, in the chamber where the bell ringing unit is. What does this show about both texts? The play is limited to stage directions which leaves Al Pacino to discuss with the actors and academics on how words should be spoken and interpret the scene structure.

The Elizabethan audience believed that dreams belong to a world dominated by fate and also believed that dreams revealed the future. In *King Richard III*, Clarence tells the audience of his dream in Act 1, Scene 4. Clarence dreamt that he "embarked to cross to Burgundy/And in my company my brother Gloucester." However, Richard pushed Clarence to the ocean as he stumbled along the deck of the ship. Clarence further states that he dreamt that he visited the underworld where he saw the ghosts of Prince Edward indicating that Clarence is tormented by his own past which shows that the dream foreshadows Richard's actions. Meanwhile in *Looking For Richard*, Pacino recontextualises the play by omitting scenes and themes out of the original text and introduces it into the twentieth century context. For instance, *Looking for Richard* does not show Clarence's dream. Why does Pacino choose to eliminate Clarence's dream in the film? The contemporary American audience believe that dreams do not believe that dreams do not reveal the future. Also, Clarence's dream is rich in language but would the audience understand? No. You see Clarence's dream is rich in imagery. For example, Clarence's vivid description of the terror of drowning is shown through the quote "O lord! Methought what pain it was todrown/What dreadful noise of waters in my ears/What sights of ugly death within mine eyes!" (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 21-23) Through Pacino's use of voxpops, one member of the general public states that "he read it aloud and it made no sense because there was no connection made". This is further reinforced by an expert who states that Shakespeare "uses a lot of fancy words". However, Pacino challenges that and says "you shouldn't have to understand every word but get the gist of it". What does this reveal about the context and values of both the Elizabethan and modern society? Due to contextual differences, values have altered through time which has been reshaped into the film to suit the postmodern audience. By omitting Clarence's Dream, Pacino glosses over Act 1, Scene 4 to solely focus on the actions and behaviours of the murderers which reflect the nature of conscience.

The nature of conscience is common in both texts. With the growth of Protestantism under the Tudor Myth, the notion of individual conscience became extremely important to the Elizabethans. The Elizabethan audience believed that individuals are guided by religion whereas modern audiences are thought to believe that individuals are guided by their conscience. In both texts, Richard is portrayed as a Machievellian 'Vice' character who will do and say anything to get what he wants. In this case, he enlists the help of two murderers to kill Clarence. Clarence was inflicted with

his conscience in Act 1, Scene 4, with the quote: “Ah keeper, keeper, I have done these things...” revealing his remorse for the things he has done and saw in his dream. However, Pacino omits the dialogue between Clarence and the Keeper and focuses on the guilty conscience of the murderers. In both texts, the murderers debate between themselves before actually killing Clarence. The first murderer disregards the nature of conscience as shown in ... with the line ‘Relent? No: ‘this cowardly and womanish’ whereas the second murderer has a different view by stating that ‘some certain dregs of conscience are yet within me’ However, the reward changes the second murderer’s mind when he mentions “Take the devil in thy mind, and believe him not” which reveals that it is the devil who is preventing him from committing the evil deed as shown in line 140 and is not mentioned in the film. Ultimately, ‘The Murderers scene’ ends with Clarence killed with blood on the white smock which creates a dramatic impact with lighting and music and a long shot of Richard hovering outside the castle. However, the film does not reveal that Richard hates Clarence as noted by the second murderer says “You are deceived. Your brother Gloucester hates you” (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 221 and 222). Also, the film does not reveal the regret that is expressed by the second murderer in lines 262 and 263 “How fain, like Pilate, would I was my hands/Of this most grievous murder.” While the values differ in both Elizabethan and modern context, the idea of conscience is still relevant in this day and age as individuals are no longer guided by religion but by conscience.

In summary we have explored connections between King Richard III and Looking for Richard. Both texts heighten our understanding of the values and contexts of both texts and the similarities between them such as the nature of conscience. The changes in context leading to changed values furthers our understanding of the values portrayed within two different time periods including the notion of dreams, its textual form, purpose and audience. Ultimately, it shapes and reshapes our understanding and meaning of both texts.