

Alliance Theatre

institute

Study Guide

Seize the King

Created as part of the Alliance Theatre's Dramaturgy by Students program

by: Ebony Tucker, Teaching Artist

with: Ms. Carmen Kinnebrew's Grade 10 Honors Literature class at Creekside High School



By Will Power

Directed by Michael John Garcés

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Hertz Stage

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Student artwork

Georgia Standards of Excellence

English Language Arts

- ELAGSE9-10RL3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- ELAGSE9-10RL9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
- ELAGSE11-12RL2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ELAGSE11-12RL3: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- ELAGSE11-12RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
- ELAGSE11-12RL7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare as well as one play by an American.)

Theatre Art

- TAHSA.RE.1 Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member.
 - a. Examine and reflect on the relationship between actor and live audience in historical and contemporary performances.
- TAHSFT.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - a. Identify and analyze plays and dramas from a variety of historical periods and cultures.
 - b. Explore the works of milestone playwrights and plays, and the relevance of historical theatre.
 - c. Recognize historical events that have influenced the role of theatre and how theatrical events have impacted cultural development.
 - d. Interpret cultural and historical research for use in a production.
- TAHSTL.PR.1 Analyze characters in theatre literature from the perspective of an actor/performer.
 - a. Use performance (e.g. oration, improvisation, rehearsed monologues, scenes) to analyze a character’s role and significance to the meaning of the play.
- TAHSTL.CN.1 Connect theatre literature to its dramaturgical contexts and other disciplines.
 - a. Trace the development of theatre from earliest forms to contemporary forms.
 - b. Identify and summarize contributions made to the development of theatre literature by different cultures and traditions.
 - c. Research and explain how cultural and historical factors have influenced playwrights and theatre literature.
 - d. Identify the elements, influences, and contributions of other art forms and content areas to theatre literature.

About the Playwright: Will Power

Biography: Will Power is an internationally renowned playwright, performer, lyricist and educator. His plays and performances have been seen in hundreds of theaters and concert halls throughout the world including Lincoln Center (New York), The Public Theater (New York), The Battersea Arts Centre (U.K.), The Sydney Opera House, as well as numerous venues in Asia, Africa, Europe and throughout North America.

Called “The best verse playwright in America” by New York Magazine, Mr. Power is an innovator and dramatic explorer of new theatrical forms. He is known as one of the pioneers and co-creators of hip hop theater, a late 20th Century art form that led the way for future iconic works such as Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, as well as dozens of hip hop education programs being established throughout the country. Power is also a master craftsman of traditionally based plays and musicals. His straight play, *Fetch Clay, Make Man*, has been produced in various LORT theaters and regional companies including the McCarter Theater, New York Theater Workshop, the Round House Theater, True Colors Theater Company, The Ensemble Theater, and Marin Theater Company to name a few. Other plays include *Stagger Lee* (Dallas Theater Company), *Five Fingers of Funk* (Children’s Theater Company), and *The Seven* (La Jolla Playhouse, New York Theater Workshop, Ten Thousand Things Theater Company, and others). Power’s collaboration with Anne Bogart’s SITI Company and composer Julia Wolfe resulted in the performance piece *Steel Hammer* (Humana Festival, UCLA Live, Brooklyn Academy of Music, plus World tour).

Power has received numerous awards for his work as a writer and performer in the field including The Doris Duke Artist Award, a Lucille Lortel Award, a United States Artist Prudential Fellowship, an NEA/TCG Residency Grant, TCG Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, a NYFA Award, and a Joyce Foundation Award.

Power is also a passionate teacher of writing and performance. He has held fellowships, residencies and faculty positions at the City College of New York, Princeton University, Occidental College, Wayne State University, The University of Michigan at Flint, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Massachusetts (Amherst). Currently, Will Power is the Andrew Mellon Playwright in Residence at the Dallas Theater Center, and the Distinguished Visiting Professor of theater at Spelman College in Atlanta.



Author Study:

1. What do you think it’s like for an artist to be a “pioneer” that paves the way for future iconic works?
2. Will Power identifies as a playwright, performer, and teacher of writing and performance. What skills are required to be an artist? What skills are required to be an educator? Where is there clear crossover between these seemingly different “jobs”?
3. If you could ask Will Power anything about this play, what would you ask?

Biography Source: willpower.tv

Photo Source: smu.edu

Synopsis

Alliance Theatre Description	<i>In our own words...</i>
<p>With his country's throne empty, Richard knocks down threats to his ascension, fueling his insatiable ambition and paranoia. Even if he can be stopped — who can ensure a tyrant won't rise in his place? Award-winning playwright Will Power delivers a propulsive and timely modern reinterpretation of Shakespeare's Richard III that the San Diego City Beat described as "a sharp, lyrical script that blurs the line between the past and the present, while positing that ambition and depravity are not the province of merely one king, one country or one moment in time."</p> <p>Seize the King is approximately two hours and includes one 15-minute intermission.</p> <p>Content Advisories: Adult Language and Themes.</p> <p>To learn more, visit: https://alliancetheatre.org/production/2019-20/seize-the-king</p>	<p><i>Seize the King is the story of Richard III, who strives to become King of England after the death of his brother, King Edward IV. In his quest for the throne, Richard undertakes diabolical schemes in order to ensure that his dreams become reality. As the audience, you will witness Richard III's perseverance, but also his unrelenting violations of moral and royal laws in order to become King.</i></p>

In your own words, how would you describe this unique production?

Compose a synopsis here:

Plot Summary

Use the graphic organizer below as a tool as you review and analyze the complex plot of *Seize the King*.

*****SPOILER ALERT!*****

Use this tool *after* reading or viewing this piece.

Act	Scene	Summary
Prologue		"The evil in men always resurfaces." Richard III was a terrible, tyrannical ruler, and he is "more alive today" than ever. Let's hope Edward V (a "man-child," but "bright-hearted king") can keep him at bay.
I	i	The funeral of Edward IV, a seemingly "perfect" and beloved ruler. Richard (Edward IV's brother) will serve as Lord Protector for two years, until Edward V is old enough to assume the throne.
	ii	Richard needs the Queen's signature to become Lord Protector.
	iii	In the garden, Lord Hastings mentors young Edward V.
	iv	Richard convinces Buckingham to eliminate people of other cultures.
	v	Richard schemes to seduce Anne.
	vi	Richard convinces Anne to marry him by releasing her from captivity.
	vii	Lord Hastings takes Edward V to Ashby to protect him.
	viii	Richard's soliloquy about his brother, Edward IV.
	ix	Richard becomes Lord Protector and takes Edward V to Ashby Tower. Buckingham kills Lord Hastings.
II	i	Tailor
	ii	Richard conspires to kill Edward V and persuades a reluctant Buckingham to publicly support him.
	iii	Reverend Shaw declares that the Queen is not truly Queen, thereby Edward V is not truly next in line to be king.
	iv	Richard kills Edward V.
III	i	The coronation of Richard III.
	ii	Buckingham visits the Queen. Haunted by the ghost of Edward V, he has had a change of heart. No longer supportive of Richard, he believes Henry Tudor should be king.
	iii	Richard desires to take over the northern land; Anne resists him. He goes to Bosworth to fight.
	iv	The Queen and Buckingham kill Richard III. The Chorus asks: When another ruler like Richard returns, will we be ready?

Characters

In *Seize the King*, five actors portray all of the characters described below.

Character	Description	Revealing Quote
Richard III	Greedy and manipulative, values money and power.	"After the body decays, wish I to live In world as this: 'Where is King Richard?' ... 'Rule, the King, forever rules.'" (Act 3, Scene 1 by Richard III)
Lord Hastings	English nobleman, righteous and loyal.	"...you good Richard should not be trusted." (Act 1, Scene 1 by Lord Hastings)
Young Warwick	Community targeted by Richard since they owned land.	"See all Warwick, waiting to join the dead Warwick" (Act 3, Scene 3 by Richard III)
Reverend Shaw	Corrupt priest who conveyed faulty information to help Richard III.	"Now you know me, many deals have we done" (Act 2, Scene 3 by Reverend Shaw)
Queen Woodville	Bold, assertive wife of late King Edward and mother of Edward V.	"But Queen Bee I am, so come Hydra come, Then I to Hercules to slay them both" (Act 1, Scene 7 by Queen Woodville)
Master of Royal Wardrobe	A generous designer hired to help King Richard during his transition as Lord Protector.	"Ay 'tis true. But today 'tis you that benefits. Two more shillings then" (Act 2, Scene 1 by Master of Royal Wardrobe)
Edward V	Fearless and destined to take hold of the throne in two years, a threat to Richard.	"So be it" - his reply when warned that he might be killed (Act 1, Scene 9 by Edward V)
Anne Neville	Honest, real, experienced, greedy. Marries Richard to obtain power.	"Did we not talk of sharing power?" (Act 2, Scene 2 by Anne Neville)
Woodville	A community portrayed as uncivilized, odd, and job-stealing others.	"I once saw a Woodville eating sushi with a fork" (Act 1, Scene 4 Lord Buckingham to Richard the Duke)
Lord Buckingham	Initially manipulated by Richard, this character undergoes a major change of heart.	"I am not murderer, maybe of Hastings, but not of children" (Act 2, Scene 2 by Lord Buckingham)
Gardener 1	Clear and knowledgeable about her status as a gardener; however, she holds secrets about discussions between royal members.	"I am the gardener nothing more, Why I've never held half a crown in my life, I've seen one, oh in this place have I seen much wealth indeed" (Act 1, Scene 3 by Gardener 1)
Gardener 2	Confident; believes that Edward V can never understand the true meaning of being the King.	"Say King Edward doesn't learn, his brain not able to attain" (Act 1, Scene 3 by Gardener 2)

Discussion Questions and Journal Prompts

The following questions may be discussed aloud or reflected upon in a journal.

Pre-Show:

1. Have you ever felt manipulated? Have you ever manipulated someone else? Describe the situation and what you learned from that experience.
2. How do different people respond to the death of a loved one?
3. The definition of pride is a deep feeling or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements. Describe a time when pride was a factor that clouded your judgement.
4. Have you ever been placed in a predicament where you gained and lost something at the same time? Explain that situation.
5. This play involves numerous types of betrayal within the family and between associates.
 - What does betrayal mean to you?
 - How do you predict the characters will react to the betrayal by others?
 - How would you feel if you were betrayed by a family member?

Plot Review:

1. Describe Edward's relationship with his deceased father.
2. What does Richard request from Lord Buckingham and why?
3. How would you characterize Lord Buckingham?
4. How does Richard feel about Anne Neville; how does he describe her?
5. Why does Richard want to marry Anne?
6. After they are married, what demands do Richard and Anne make of Queen Woodville?

Post-Show:

1. How would you characterize Queen Woodville and why?
2. Imagine you're a playwright. How would you re-write the end of this story?
3. If you were Queen Woodville, would you sign the papers or not? Explain.
4. Imagine yourself as Richard's advisor. Based on his decisions throughout the play, what advice would you give him and why? Explain your reasoning.
5. How would you feel if someone close to you began to secretly aspire to take something that belongs to you?
6. What punishment do you think Richard ultimately deserves (other than killing or torturing him)?

Text-to-Self Connections:

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to understand a decision, act, or statement from someone's else point of view?
2. What character do you relate to the most? Provide 2-3 reasons why you feel a connection to that character.
3. What does power mean to you? Do you desire power?
4. What lessons can we learn from Lord Buckingham?

The Real-Life History of Richard III

Early Life

- King Richard the Third was born on October 2, 1452 in the Fotheringhay Castle.
- As a child Richard stayed with his mother Cecily Neville and never had a close relationship with his father King Richard of York.
- During Richard's early adult years, he was loyal to King Edward IV and even gained his respect and recognition.
- Unfortunately, Edward IV died, resulting in his oldest son Edward V to become king.

Rise to power

- Richard III was full of hatred and began to do anything in his power to succeed the throne.
- Richard later decided to marry Anne Neville, a Warwick, to inherit her lands and power.
- Together both King Richard III and Anne Neville funded Cambridge University's King's College and Queens College.
- Richard usurped the throne and went as far as locking his nephew in the tower and killing him, which led him to now be the successor of the throne.

Downfall

- King Richard was accused of poisoning his wife Anne Neville 5 months before his death in the Battle of Bosworth on August 22, 1485.
- King Richard III was the last king of the house of York and the very last king to die in combat.
- He is remembered as one of the worst and most evil of all kings.



Figurative Language

Why use Figurative Language?

Writers use figurative (non-literal) language to make their work more emphatic and/or vivid.

Types of Figurative Language:

- Hyperbole: An exaggerated statement or claim that is not meant to be taken literally.
- Simile: A comparison between two seemingly dissimilar objects using “like” or “as.”
- Allusion: A moment in which an object or circumstance from an unrelated context is referenced.

Activity Directions:

1. Read each line below aloud.
2. Identify if the line includes figurative language – and if so, what type (hyperbole, simile, or allusion).
3. The first one is done as an example!

Line	Figurative Language (Identify Type and Explain)
“I’d much rather eat death than eat your gruel” (Act 1, Scene 2)	<i>Hyperbole</i> - Richard is exaggerating the disgust and distaste for Queen Woodville’s gruel.
“Like the muted father who states suddenly ‘we need bread’ even though many loaves sit on top of the fridge. The father grabs coat and hat and out the door ‘I’ll be right back’ says he, never to return, sighted on rare occasions, slinking out The Pool Hall, hustling and crossing streets but never to be help by, spoken to, lived with, or loved by. Thus far is peace to man.” (Act 1, Scene 3)	
“To make us strong again, to make us whole, and pure, and right. To bring back England to England.” (Act 1, Scene 4)	
“She is large, in her ripples oceans can’t compete” (Act 1, Scene 5)	
“Then I to Hercules slay them both” (Act 1, Scene 7)	
“False! the two they move like double head hydra” (Act 1, Scene 7)	
“Of deceit far worse that Judas, ten times” (Act 3, Scene 2)	
“Satan’s fall from grace have I fallen” (Act 3, Scene 2)	

Noteworthy Quotes

The Dramaturgy by Students class selected (7) quotes they feel are most important to understand these characters and this text. Engage in a close reading of these quotes – what does the language reveal about each character? How do these moments move the plot?

Quote	Student Interpretation
<p>ACT I, SCENE 1 - LORD HASTINGS You, his most faithful relative good Richard May all of England sing your praises Only by your brother are you bested In honor, intelligence, wisdom, good looks and vision Only by him, no others will ever match Your goodness. Good Richard, he-</p>	<p>Lord Hastings was being sure to tell Richard that even though he was great he could never be as great as Edward the 4th.</p>
<p>ACT I, SCENE 2 - RICHARD THE DUKE Wenches give to him with open thighs Wenches give to me with closed eyes</p>	<p>Girls were greatly attracted to Edward, and were very resilient with Richard</p>
<p>ACT I, SCENE 6 - RICHARD By wanderers of wilderness Sweet you are love I my syrup thick Allow me to pour this sweet over your Stack Pancakes, but much more than pleasures</p>	<p>Richard is complimenting Anne's figure, and complimenting her body.</p>
<p>ACT I, SCENE 6 - ANNE NEVILLE I say lets do it. Let's marry. But good Richard. If you cross me, and take more than your share of pie I will not only throw pie in face I will take all unused dough, And smother you with it</p>	<p>Anne told Richard that if she is not given her part of "the pie" or he takes more than what they agreed to, then she'll retaliate.</p>
<p>ACT I, SCENE 9 - EDWARD V Will there ever be a time you say "ready now Edward" Will you ever release me into world Willingly, without worry of what's to come? Never will you do this, always will you want to hold me back Keep me under your shade, away from harsh sun But sun I must have, and if not now then when?</p>	<p>This part is saying that since his mother will never want to let him go, but he wants now to be his time to be free.</p>
<p>ACT II, SCENE 2 - RICHARD, THE PROTECTOR Now listen man, and Buckingham listen good. A difference there is between not the whole truth and a lie</p>	<p>This is Richard using his manipulative ways to not tell the whole truth.</p>
<p>ACT II, SCENE 4 - RICHARD, THE PROTECTOR Want you to know, that this act is done Only toward purpose to be king What I was born to do. This is why I act this. Can you understand?</p>	<p>Richard is trying to talk Edward V down as he takes extreme measures for his own success.</p>

Costume Renderings

What do you notice (see, think, wonder) about the student-created costume renderings below? Compare/contrast these images with the actual costumes presented in the Alliance Theatre's production of Will Power's *Richard III*.



Works Cited

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