



My kingdom for a horse

The Earl of Richmond, the future Henry VII, fights against Richard's forces at Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. Richard fights desperately but he is killed by Richmond.

William Shakespeare
Richard III
(1593)

Act V, Scenes 5-6

1

[Another part of the field.

Alarum: Excursions¹. Enter **NORFOLK** and **Soldiers**; then at the other door **CATESBY**².]

CATESBY **Rescue**³, my Lord of Norfolk, **rescue, rescue!**

The king enacts more wonders than a man⁴,

Daring an opposite to every danger⁵.

His **horse** is slain⁶, and all on foot he fights,

5 Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death⁷.

Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!

[**Alarums**. Enter **KING RICHARD III**.]

KING RICHARD III A **horse!** a **horse!** my kingdom for a **horse!**

CATESBY **Withdraw**⁸, my lord; I'll help you to a **horse**⁹.

KING RICHARD III Slave¹⁰! I have set my life upon a cast¹¹,

10 And I will stand the hazard of the die¹².

I think there be six Richmonds in the field:

Five have I slain to-day instead of him!

A **horse!** a **horse!** my kingdom for a **horse!**

2

[**Alarum**. Enter **KING RICHARD III** and **RICHMOND**; they fight. **KING RICHARD III** is slain. A retreat is sounded¹³; then with a flourish re-enter **RICHMOND**, and **DERBY** bearing the crown, with **divers other Lords**¹⁴.]

RICHMOND God and your arms be praised, victorious friends,

15 The day is ours, **the bloody dog is dead**.

DERBY Courageous Richmond, well hast thou acquit thee¹⁵!

Lo, here, this long-usurped royalty¹⁶

From the dead temples of **this bloody wretch**¹⁷

Have I pluck'd off, to grace thy brows withal¹⁸.

20 **Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it.**

RICHMOND [...] **Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled**¹⁹

That in **submission** will return to us;

And then, as we **have ta'en the sacrament**,

We will unite the white rose and the red²⁰.

- 1 **Alarum: Excursions**. Allarme: Scorrerie.
- 2 **CATESBY**. Sir William Catesby, un nobile dalla parte di Richard.
- 3 **Rescue**. Aiuto.
- 4 **The king ... man**. Il re compie prodigi più di quanto non sia consentito a un uomo.
- 5 **Daring ... danger**. Sfidando un avversario ad ogni cimento.
- 6 **His horse is slain**. Il suo cavallo è stato ucciso.
- 7 **Seeking ... death**. Cercando Richmond nella gola della morte.
- 8 **Withdraw**. Ritiratevi.
- 9 **I'll help ... horse**. Vi aiuterò io a trovare un cavallo.
- 10 **Slave**. Canaglia.
- 11 **I have ... a cast**. Mi sono giocato la vita ai dadi.
- 12 **I will stand ... die**. Voglio stare al gioco e correrne il rischio.
- 13 **A retreat is sounded**. Ritirata e squilli di tromba.
- 14 **divers other Lords**. Diversi altri nobili.
- 15 **well ... thee**. Ti sei battuto bene.
- 16 **Lo ... royalty**. Ecco questa insegna reale troppo a lungo usurpata.
- 17 **From the dead ... wretch**. Dalle morte tempie di questo miserabile assassino.
- 18 **Have I ... withal**. Io l'ho strappata per adonar la tua fronte.
- 19 **Proclaim ... fled**. Proclamate il perdono per i fuggiaschi.
- 20 **We ... red**. Uniremo la rosa bianca (emblema della casa di York) e la rosa rossa (emblema della casa di Lancaster).

VISUAL ANALYSIS

1 **READ** the text and write a heading to each section.

2 **LOOK** at the visual analysis of the text and write down what each mark represents in the spaces provided.

Rescue

The king

.....

the bloody

.....

Proclaim



3 DISCUSS the following questions in pairs.

- 1 After reading these lines, do you side with King Richard or Richmond? Why?
- 2 Why do you think Shakespeare focuses on Richard's and Richmond's characters rather than on the battle?
- 3 Do you think Richmond's last words anticipate that he will rule wisely?

4 COMPLETE the summary with the words from the box.

defeat

embodiment

weakness

fight

has recognised

brave

reconciliation

ferocious

crown

invocation



The text opens with Catesby's **(1)** to Richard's followers to help their king. The repetition of the word 'rescue' points out the king's imminent **(2)** Richard's last words 'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!' underline that the king himself **(3)** his dangerous situation, though he wants to prove a **(4)** soldier (lines 2-5, 10). Richard becomes aware of his **(5)** and he realises the enormous force and power of his enemies (lines 10-13).

Richard is the **(6)** of pure evil; in fact, Richmond and his soldiers consider him a **(7)** animal calling him 'the bloody dog' (line 15) and 'this bloody wretch' (line 18).

The turning point of the text is in lines 19-20 when Richard's **(8)** is offered to the future king, Henry VII, who closes the text with a speech of **(9)**

The stage directions concentrate on the **(10)** between Richard and the Earl of Richmond.