

16. Richard III Model answer

Q. In these extracts, how do the characters use language to manipulate others?

Richard and Buckingham are both proficient in using language to manipulate and in these scenes we see how cold they both can be when they are exercising power. Hastings falls victim to Buckingham and Richard in a similar way to how Buckingham does to Richard, only Buckingham realises before he is trapped.

In the first extract, Richard knows that Hastings does not support him becoming King and he wants an excuse to get rid of him. The language he uses to trap him into saying something offensive is full of references to witchcraft, "devilish plots", "damned witchcraft", "hellish charms" which could make Hastings feel that it was not an attack on him and so "doom" the perpetrators. He is thus off his guard when Richard launches his attack. Richard knows when he has an opportunity and immediately attacks "Talk'st thou to me of ifs?" and ensures his success with the proclamation, "I will not dine until I see the same", ensuring Hastings' execution.

Similarly, Richard is in full control of the situation in the second extract. He affects lack of interest and distraction, seemingly to annoy Buckingham by being "not in the giving vein today". The audience can sense the tension between the two former allies and it is the dread of Richard choosing to take a further opportunity to execute someone due to one false word that we expect.