

## Close Reading of *Richard III* 1.4.10-42

Before Clarence is murdered by his brother—although not by his own hand—he has a dream. The length of the dream and the vivid imagery contained therein suggest it is an area rich with interpretive possibilities. Your task is to mine them.

Read the following description of a close reading and then conduct a close reading on the attached passage. After annotating, write a brief summation of what conclusions you can draw about themes in the play based on your close reading. Hand in all work at the end of the period for full credit. Will count as a quiz grade.

In literary criticism, close reading describes the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of text. Such a reading places great emphasis on the particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold as they are read.

### **Steps for conducting a close reading of a text:**

- Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text.
  - "Annotating" means underlining or highlighting key words and phrases—anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions—as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence—the first step in moving from reader to writer.
- Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities.
- Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed—especially how, why, and so what.

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CLARENCE Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower, 10  
 And was embark'd to cross to Burgundy;  
 And, in my company, my brother Gloucester;  
 Who from my cabin tempted me to walk  
 Upon the hatches: thence we looked toward England,  
 And cited up a thousand fearful times, 15  
 During the wars of York and Lancaster  
 That had befall'n us. As we paced along  
 Upon the giddy footing of the hatches,  
 Methought that Gloucester stumbled; and, in falling,  
 Struck me, that thought to stay him, overboard, 20  
 Into the tumbling billows of the main.  
 Lord, Lord! methought, what pain it was to drown!  
 What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears!  
 What ugly sights of death within mine eyes!  
 Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks; 25  
 Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;  
 Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,  
 Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,  
 All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:  
 Some lay in dead men's skulls; and, in those holes 30  
 Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,  
 As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,  
 Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,  
 And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.  
 BRAKENBURY Had you such leisure in the time of death 35  
 To gaze upon the secrets of the deep?  
 CLARENCE Methought I had; and often did I strive  
 To yield the ghost: but still the envious flood  
 Kept in my soul, and would not let it forth  
 To seek the empty, vast and wandering air; 40  
 But smother'd it within my panting bulk,  
 Which almost burst to belch it in the sea.