***I- M.A. ENGLISH – SHAKESPEARE***

**RICHARD-II**

1. **The Basic Theme:**

Richard II deals with the events which happened during the last two years of Richard’s reign, and which resulted in his deposition and death. The story of the play can easily be divided into five clear cut parts which coincide with the five Acts of the play. Thus *Act I* deals with ***the banishment of Bolingbroke*,** *Act II* with ***the revolt of Bolingbroke against the King***, *Act* *III* with ***Richard’s arrest***, *Act IV* with ***his deposition and dethronement***, and Act V with ***his death***. The play thus depicts **the fall of King Richard and the rise of Bolingbroke**. The one rises as the other falls.

1. **The Banishment of Bolingbroke:**

The play opens with a quarrel between Henry Bolingbroke and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, each accusing the other of high treason. The king makes vain attempts to settle their quarrel peacefully, but ultimately has to fix a date for the settlement of the quarrel through a single combat between the parties concerned. It is decided that the trial would take place at Coventry on St. Lambert’s day.

On the fixed date and time, the due preparations are made, and all assemble at the place of tournament. But the king suddenly changes his mind, and the trial is not allowed to continue. Instead, the king banishes Mowbray for life and Bolingbroke for ten years. But Bolingbroke’s sentence is reduced to six years because Richard sees pain and grief reflected in the eyes of Bolingbroke’s father, old John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Later John of Gaunt dies of grief at his son’s banishment. King Richard seized the Duke’s estate and other property, for he badly needs money for the Irish wars. He leaves for Ireland soon after, appointing Duke of York as regent to act on his behalf during his absence from the country.

1. **Richard’s Irish Expedition and The Revolt of Bolingbroke:**

Taking advantage of Richard’s absence, Bolingbroke returns. He lands at Ravenspur, and the dissatisfied nobles flock to him in large numbers. The Earl of Northumberland takes the lead in this respect. The commons too flock to him for all have been alienated from Richard by his heavy ***taxation and misrule***. Bolingbroke marches along, and in the wilds of Gloucestershire he meets the Duke of York. He assures him that he has come to claim his own rights as the heir to his father, and has no higher ambitions. Helpless before the might of the rebel force, the Duke of York goes over to his side.

1. **The Arrest of King Richard:**

Richard is delayed in Ireland, and in the meanwhile his kingdom slips out of his hands. When he does return, he finds that he has only a few supporters left. He seeks shelter in Flint Castle, in Wales. Here Bolingbroke meets him and though he makes a show of loyalty and obedience, it is soon clear that he is the master of the situation. Richard bows to the inevitable, offers him the crown even before it is asked for, and broken down with grief agrees to be taken to London. He is now a virtual prisoner in the hands of Bolingbroke.

1. **The Deposition of King Richard**

His deposition and dethronement soon follow. The parliament meets at Westminster and approves of Bolingbroke’s plans. King Richard is brought in, expresses his willingness to abdicate, and offers his Crown to the usurper in the presence of all assembled. His anguish is heart-rending and moves all save such hard-hearted lords as the Earl of Northumberland, who wants that Richard should read out the charges that have been brought against him. He is sent to the ***Tower,*** but later on his place of confinement is changed, and he is taken to ***Pomfret Castle***, and his beloved Queen is sent to France, to end her days there.

1. **King Richard’s Last Days and Death**

The ex-king lives as a prisoner in Pomfret Castle, but his end is hastened by the Oxford conspiracy on his behalf. Bolingbroke uses the conspiracy as an excuse for the murder or Richard. In the presence of the Earl of Exton, he expresses a wish to be relieved of, ***“his living fear”***, i.e., Richard. Accordingly, Essex attacks him in his prison, and kills him. Thus does the ex-king come to a violent death, but he fights heroically, and is more noble and brave in his death, than he ever was in his life.

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\*\*\* Wish You All Success \*\*\*