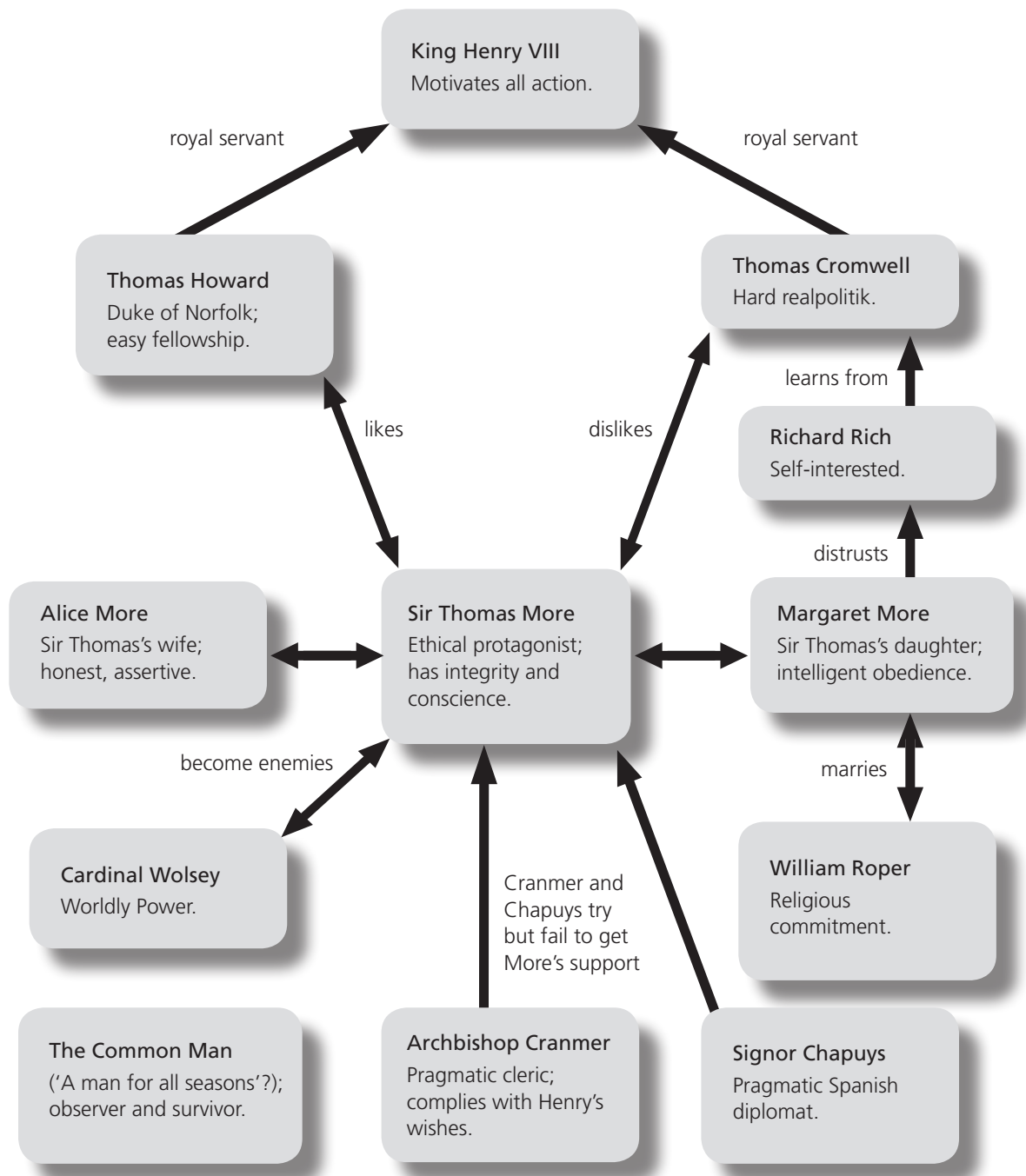


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Character map



Introduction

Since its initial publication and performance in 1960, Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons* has become an enduring classic, notable for its sensitive portrayal of a man who remains true to his principles even as this leads to his destruction. Yet the play is much more than a mere character study; it advances a humanistic world view that highlights the problems of self-serving pragmatism, delivering its themes via witty dialogue and an innovative style that breaks down the barrier between stage and audience.

The role of Sir Thomas More was made famous by Paul Scofield on the stage and later in the 1966 Fred Zinnemann film version, also scripted by Bolt, which won six Academy Awards. Charlton Heston played Sir Thomas in a later version made for television that also starred Vanessa Redgrave and Sir John Gielgud.

Brief synopsis

Act One opens in the house of Sir Thomas More and his family, where Richard Rich and Thomas Norfolk are dinner guests. There is a brief moment of tension between Rich and More: Rich believes that 'every man has his price' (p.2), but More refuses to accept this. While Rich seeks More's support, he disdains More's offer of a teaching post. The friendship between More and Norfolk, in contrast, seems more genuine.

Sir Thomas is summoned to see the powerful Cardinal Wolsey, who wants More to declare his support for Henry VIII's divorce. More refuses. After leaving Wolsey, he meets the secretary to the Cardinal, Thomas Cromwell, and Signor Chapuys, the Spanish ambassador, each of whom attempts to gain information from More for their own purposes.

The King makes More the Lord Chancellor, attempting to personally secure support for his divorce – support which More still refuses to give. Meanwhile, Richard Rich has come under the sway of Cromwell, who wishes to use him for his own ends.

Act Two begins two years later. Henry VIII has established the Church of England and declared himself its leader, rejecting the authority of Rome. The English bishops submit to Henry's demands, and More resigns from the Chancellorship in protest. Although he avoids making any public statement on the King's Supremacy or his divorce in order to avoid a charge of treason, More becomes impoverished and is forced to relinquish his house and staff. Cromwell and Rich,

