

Propaganda and Shakespeare's *Richard III*
Student worksheets

Warmer – talking about propaganda

a. Look at these two propaganda posters, and discuss the questions with a partner.



Art.IWM PST 0311

1. When and where do you think these posters were produced?
2. Who is portrayed in each poster? What are the people doing, and where are they looking?
3. What are the artists trying to say in each poster?
4. Do you think these posters are successful? Why?/Why not?

b. What is propaganda?

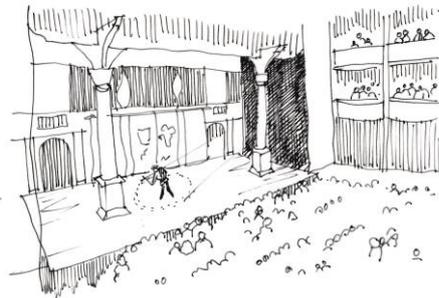
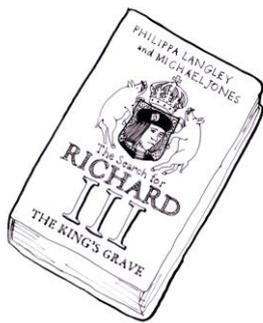
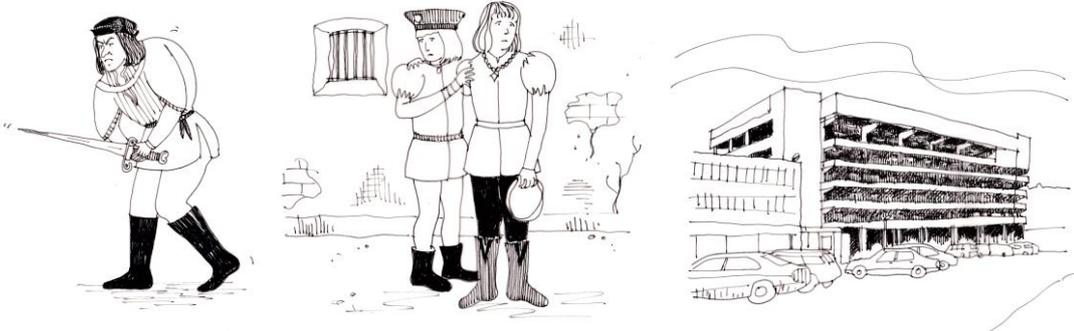
Task 1 – pre-reading quiz

Work in groups to answer the questions about propaganda in Shakespeare's times.

1. Who was monarch when Shakespeare was a boy?
 - a. King James I
 - b. Queen Victoria
 - c. Queen Elizabeth I
2. What religion was this monarch?
 - a. Protestant
 - b. Catholic
 - c. Buddhist
3. What kind of person is King Richard in Shakespeare's play *Richard III*?
 - a. romantic
 - b. shy and sweet
 - c. evil
4. What was the purpose of plays in Shakespeare's times?
 - a. to instruct
 - b. to entertain
 - c. both a and b
5. Where was King Richard III's body discovered in 2013?
 - a. under a church
 - b. under a nightclub
 - c. under a car park

Task 2 – predicting with pictures

You are going to read and discuss two texts about propaganda and Shakespeare’s play Richard III. The subjects of the pictures below are all mentioned in the text. How do you think they will be connected?



Task 3 – jigsaw reading

You are going to read one of two texts.

Student A – read the extract from a history book and answer the questions on page 4.

Student B – read the book review and answer the questions on page 5.

Task 4 – discussion

Work with a student from the other group (a Student A and a Student B together) and tell them about the text you have read, using the pictures from Task 2 to help you.

Working together, make a list of all the different examples of propaganda in the two texts.

Task 5 – vocabulary: guessing meaning from context

Find and underline the following words and phrases in the texts:

Text A

- a. the masses (paragraph 1)
- b. promoted (paragraph 2)
- c. put on (paragraph 2)
- d. portray (paragraph 3)
- e. subversive (paragraph 3)
- f. committing treason (paragraph 3)

Task 5 – guessing meaning from context (continued)

Text B

- g. megalomaniac (paragraph 2)
- h. set the record straight (paragraph 2)
- i. malicious (paragraph 3)

Now match words a–i with their meanings 1–9.

1. trying to overthrow the government or establishment
2. spiteful and cruel
3. to represent something or someone
4. obsessed with power
5. saying or doing something against the King or Queen
6. showed that something was good
7. performed
8. to tell the truth about something when people have had the wrong idea
9. the people (not the higher classes)

Task 6 – discussing propaganda techniques

Work in groups. Think of a character from history who you all know about. Discuss the following questions:

1. What do you know about this character?
2. What words come to mind when you think of this character? Why do you think this is?
3. Did propaganda help to create a certain image of this character? How did this work?



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Extension Activity

Design your own Elizabethan propaganda poster to advertise Shakespeare's play, *Richard III*. Present your poster to the rest of the class and talk about the propaganda techniques which helped you to create it.

Task 3 – Student A's text and questions

Read Text A, an extract from a history book.

Can you find any of the answers to the quiz questions (Task 1) in your text?

Text A

Propaganda in Shakespeare's times

In Shakespeare's time, plays were not just written and performed for entertainment: they were also seen as a way of teaching audiences and reinforcing Queen Elizabeth's power for the benefit of the masses.

When he was a boy, Shakespeare acted in school plays which always ended with a song about the Queen's wisdom and goodness. In 1587, the Queen's theatre company arrived in Shakespeare's home town of Stratford. This theatre company was a Protestant acting group which promoted Protestantism and warned audiences against the dangers of Catholicism. The plays this company put on also aimed to prepare the public for the forthcoming war against Catholics in Europe. Shakespeare joined the Queen's company, even although he himself came from a Catholic family. It was while touring with the Queen's company that Shakespeare first put on plays such as *King Lear* and acted out the cartoon villainy of Richard III.

Later, when Shakespeare wrote *Richard III*, he continued to portray Richard III as a wholly evil character. Why did he do this? Well, Elizabeth was a Tudor queen: it was her ancestors who had killed Richard III (who was from the House of York) at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. If Shakespeare had portrayed Richard III as a good king, Queen Elizabeth would be displeased and Shakespeare might have been accused of being subversive or even of committing treason.

If you read Text A, answer these questions:

- a. Why were plays written in Shakespeare's times?
- b. How did plays usually finish?
- c. What did the Queen's theatre company want to teach its audience?
- d. What kind of man was King Richard III in Shakespeare's play?
- e. Why did Shakespeare portray him as being an evil man?
- f. Look at the pictures from Task 2. Which belong to your text?

Task 3 – Student B's text and questions

Read Text B, a book review.

Can you find any of the answers to the quiz questions (Task 1) in your text?

Text B

Richard III: goody, baddy or somewhere in between?

The recent discovery of Richard III's body has inspired an exciting new book, *The King's Grave* by Philippa Langley and Michael Jones. The two authors explore the complex man behind Shakespeare's propaganda.

Richard III is one Shakespearean baddy we all love to hate. The hunchbacked megalomaniac who murdered his own small nephews has been a favourite villain in British theatres for hundreds of years, but Langley and Jones hope to set the record straight – by showing that there was more than one side to the famous king.

Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III has become the way we all like to imagine the historical figure. Yet Shakespeare's Richard was inspired by sixteenth-century writer Thomas More – who described the king as 'malicious', 'wrathful', small, crooked and hunchbacked.

Langley hopes that the discovery of Richard III's grave (underneath a car park in Leicester) will help people to begin to uncover the historical truth about Richard III. She believes that Richard III has been a victim of propaganda and that he is innocent of the deaths of his nephews. Jones, on the other hand, believes that while Richard III probably did kill his young nephews he was, nevertheless, intelligent and brave.

If you read Text B, answer these questions:

- a. What is the name of Langley and Jones's book?
- b. Why did they decide to write this book?
- c. Where did Shakespeare get the idea that Richard III was evil and hunchbacked?
- d. Where was King Richard III's body discovered?
- e. What do Langley and Jones disagree on?
- f. Look at the pictures from Task 2. Which belong to your text?