



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

RICHARD III

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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Written by Steve Weed

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Historical Background

Objective: Researching the historical background of the play

Activity

Richard III is an eponymous play, meaning that the title of the play pertains to someone who actually existed. Understanding specific details about King Richard III can give you deeper insights about some of the themes and motifs Shakespeare borrowed from Richard's life and utilized for artistic purposes. Use the Internet or other sources to research King Richard III. Then, list three actual historical events that occurred during his life that you predict will appear in Shakespeare's play. In your predictions, include the reasons you believe those events will be used in the play.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I, Scene I

Meter

Objective: Understanding iambic pentameter

Activity

The opening soliloquy of *Richard III* is among the most famous speeches in English literature. It is written in iambic pentameter, a meter common in Shakespeare's plays.

A line of iambic pentameter is made up of five "feet" (*penta* means "five"), each of which contains an iamb. An iamb is made up of two syllables, the first unstressed and the second stressed: daDUM. Examples of iambic words include *intense* (inTENSE), *bizarre* (biZARRE), *contempt* (conTEMPT), and *Michelle* (miCHELLE).

When read aloud, a line of iambic pentameter has the following rhythm:

da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM

The opening soliloquy in *Richard III* contains many traditional lines of iambic pentameter, but it also contains lines of what are called inverted iambic pentameter. On occasion, a writer will invert the first word of a line of iambic pentameter, meaning the first word of a line will have the first syllable stressed and the second syllable unstressed. Thus, when read aloud, a line of inverted iambic pentameter has the following rhythm:

DA dum / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM

An example of inverted iambic pentameter is the first line of *Richard III*:

Now is / the win / ter of / our dis / con tent

DA dum / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM

Read the opening soliloquy of *Richard III* and then write three lines of iambic pentameter and three lines of inverted iambic pentameter from it. Write each line like the examples to show the meter pattern of it.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II, Scene I**Class Poll**

Objective: Forming opinions and making persuasive arguments

Activity

King Edward IV appears and announces that there has been too much fighting in his court. He is able to get Buckingham and Hastings to offer peace to Queen Elizabeth and those loyal to her. The King also announces that he has forgiven his brother and has sent a letter to the Tower permitting Clarence to go free.

When Edward learns that Clarence has been murdered, the momentary peace among the factious servants to the King is gone. Edward is upset by the news of Clarence's death. Richard reminds Edward that he (the king) was the one who initially ordered the death decree. Edward rebukes his attendants for not talking him out of his initial order.

Form small groups, and discuss who you believe is most culpable for Clarence's death. Is it Richard, King Edward, Clarence himself, or someone else? Allow ample time for your classmates to make their arguments and then take a poll to determine whom your group believes caused Clarence's death. Write down your group's decision along with an explanation as to how you reached this conclusion.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III, Scene I**Rewriting a Scene****Objective:** Rewriting a scene in contemporary English**Activity**

This scene opens with Prince Edward and his traveling entourage arriving to the palace in London. Richard and Buckingham put on enthusiastic faces as they attempt to treat him regally and with joy. Prince Edward sees through their charade, and he proves to be the verbal equal to Richard. Immediately, Prince Edward and Richard exchange sharp words. Today, it might be said that the two are “talking trash” to each other.

Reread the opening of this scene, specifically lines 2 – 17 and then rewrite those lines in contemporary English. The two are attempting to verbally outdo each other and put each other down, so use language that is competitive and witty. Language that is offensive, insensitive, or inappropriate for the classroom is not permitted. Try to be as clever with your contemporary translation of this scene as Shakespeare is in portraying the verbally dueling rivals.

After you have modernized the language of lines 2 – 17, write a brief explanation as to who did a better job of outwitting the other, and why.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III, Scenes I – VII**Dramatic Interpretation**

Objective: Understanding drama through performance

Activity

Plays such as *Richard III* are written for the stage. Reading a play without watching it sometimes omits elements that only a physical performance can introduce.

Form into small groups, and select a single scene from Act III to perform for the class. Divide the roles among group members. If necessary, divide the scene to accommodate everyone in the group; for example, two people might act the first half of a scene, two others the second half.

Discuss your chosen scene, and settle on the details that staging will require. Will you use props or sound effects? Where will each character stand? Will characters move around during the scene? How will the characters speak their lines?

In considering these and other questions, be sure to record the reasons behind your decisions. Why is your dramatic interpretation of your scene an appropriate one? How does your performance capture the essence of and accentuate the key issues in *Richard III*? Why would Shakespeare, if he could see it, appreciate the way you have staged the scene?

Each group will write an explanation of their staging decisions and the reasoning behind them.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act IV, Scene I**Emotion Collage**

Objectives: Creating a collage that reflects characters' emotions
Understanding gender roles

Activity

The Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, and Lady Anne (now Richard's wife) wait outside the Tower of London to see the imprisoned princes. They are informed that Richard is the lord protector, the temporary king until Prince Edward is of age, and Richard has ordered that none of these women be allowed to visit the boys. Each of the three implores the guard, pleading with him that, as matriarchs, they have the right to see the boys.

The guard responds, "No, madam, no; I may not leave it so: / I am bound by oath, and therefore pardon me." With that pronouncement, he leaves, and the women are left helpless to aid the young princes.

During medieval times, women had very little influence. Any authority they had was in the household and the raising of children. This scene depicts the powerlessness of females. These women are nobility and yet they do not have the power to see their young male relatives, the exact area in which they are supposed to have clout.

Create a collage that illustrates your perceptions about what these women are feeling. Have the collage represent all three women together in some way, but also as individuals. Use the information from the play to help portray the women in as well rounded a manner as possible, remembering that while each does not have much legal power, each has, at times, shown strength and determination.

Use any materials available to you to illustrate your ideas. Be creative, and include as many details as possible.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act V, Scene I**All Souls' Day**

Objectives: Researching religious holidays
 Understanding character motivation

Activity

Richard's forces have captured Buckingham. He asks the sheriff if he can speak to Richard, and the request is denied. Buckingham knows he is going to die, and his impending death gives him time to reflect. He realizes it is All Souls' Day, and this understanding causes him to remember all of the promises he did not keep to Edward IV.

Research All Souls' Day, and its preceding celebration, All Saints' Day, and their importance to people of faith during the Middle Ages. After you have completed your research, write an essay about Buckingham's repentance in this scene. Why do you think Buckingham wait until this day to repent? Is his repentance sincere? How does he feel about being executed on All Souls' Day? Why did he not repent the day before, on All Saints' Day? If he had not been captured, would he have admitted his faults? These are questions to consider in developing your essay, but you are not limited to them.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act V, Scene III**Found Poem****Objective:** Writing a "Found Poem"**Activity**

A "found" poem is a poem made up entirely of phrases, sentences, or quotations found in the text. Go back through this scene and make up a found poem of your own. The poem could tell the reader something about Richard's or Richmond's emotional state, but this is not necessary; it may have direct relevance or be totally unrelated to the action of the story, which is one of the best parts of writing a found poem.

Your poem should be at least 10 lines long. The lines do not need to rhyme, but they certainly may. You can arrange the phrases in any way you like and change the punctuation, but do not deviate from Shakespeare's actual words. You may add *and*, *a*, *the*, or alter the tense of verbs, if necessary. Move adjectives and adverbs to create different images. Give the poem a title, which may or may not come from the play. The following is an example taken entirely from Act IV, Scene IV.

"Margaret's Mad Melancholy"

Plantagenet doth quit Plantagenet.
Edward for Edward pays a dying debt.
When holy Harry died, and my sweet son
Here in these confines slyly have I lurk'd,
To watch the waning of mine adversaries.
A dire induction am I witness to,
The flattering index of a direful pageant;
One heaved a-high, to be hurl'd down below.
If ancient sorrow be most reverend,
Give mine the benefit of seniory,
And let my woes frown on the upper hand.
If sorrow can admit society.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Email to Shakespeare

Objectives: Forming and expressing opinions about the play
Writing an email to Shakespeare

Activity

Imagine you are close friends with Shakespeare, and he has asked you for feedback on *Richard III*. Shakespeare wants to use your comments as a way to help him make the play as good as possible, so he wants to know what is working well and what is not working well.

He has asked you to write him an email in which you discuss the aspects in the play you believe are the strongest and those you believe are the weakest. Shakespeare wants detailed feedback. He wants you to be specific about why the play is strong and what exactly about it works well. He also wants you to explain why you believe the weak aspects negatively affect the play and how they can be improved.

Write the email as if you are addressing Shakespeare directly. You may use contemporary English or Elizabethan language.