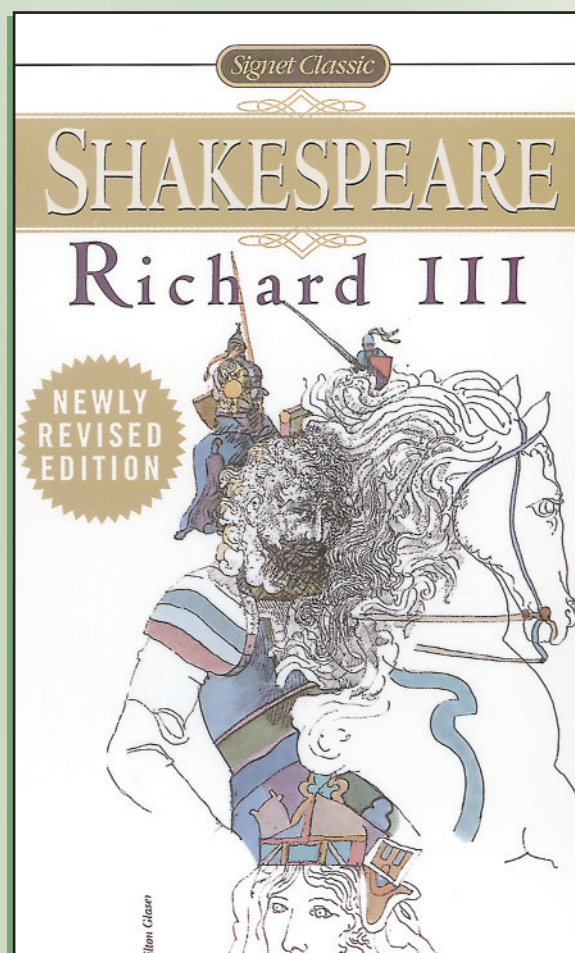




A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSIC EDITION OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
RICHARD III

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INTRODUCTION

Of all his plays, Shakespeare's history plays are likely to challenge the reading and interpretation skills of high school and college students because of the complexity of background information, the quick shifts of action, and the large number of characters—some who only appear for a short scene. Preparing students to read any text is important; it is crucial to ensure comprehension and enjoyment of a history play. Solid preparation will make this play accessible to advanced high school students and to most college students.

The name of Richard III may call up some associations. Students may know that Richard is reported to have had his two nephews killed in the Tower of London. But their knowledge may be limited to this one legendary aspect of Richard's history. Sorting out the stuff of legends from historical reality could be one of the goals of reading this history play.

At times Richard is cast as an allegorical figure, a representation of evil whose downfall provides a moral lesson to the reader and playgoer. Students' understanding of Richard's character may be enhanced if they explore other allegorical representations of evil both in the sixteenth century and in the Jacobean revenge tragedies of the early seventeenth century. Students can see similar types of stock villains in popular culture today.

Also, underlying the portrayal of Richard is the question of Shakespeare's purpose in writing the play. What shape does he give to the historical facts and why? If Richard is cast as the villain, who are the good people? What is the moral order within the world of the play? This guide includes a variety of activities and discussion questions to stimulate students' reactions and responses to the play before they begin to read, while they are reading, and then after they have read the play. It is assumed that the teacher of a Shakespearean history play has taught some of his other plays as well and can draw on this experience. Teachers should choose the activities which best meet students' needs and interests.

OVERVIEW

LIST OF CHARACTERS

HOUSE OF YORK

King Edward IV
Princes Edward and Richard
George, Duke of Clarence
Richard, Duke of Gloucester

HOUSE OF LANCASTER

Henry, Earl of Richmond

CHARACTERS BY RELATIONSHIP

King Edward IV
His sons: Edward, Prince of Wales; Richard, Duke of York
His brothers: George, Duke of Clarence; Richard, Duke of Gloucester
His wife: Queen Elizabeth
His mother: Duchess of York, also mother of Clarence and Gloucester

Allies of Queen Elizabeth: Lord Rivers, brother of Queen;
Elizabeth; Marquis of Dorset and Lord Grey, sons of Elizabeth; Sir Thomas Vaughan

Allies of Richard: Lord Hastings, Duke of Buckingham

Other important characters: Queen Margaret, widow of King Henry VI; Lady Anne, her daughter-in-law, widow of Edward Prince of Wales, who was the son of King Henry VI

Note: Send students to the Internet for more detailed background information about the War of the Roses between the houses of York and Lancaster and for more information about the chronology of monarchs on the British throne.

SYNOPSIS**ACT I, SCENE I**

In the first lines of the play, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, reviews the current state of affairs in England. War is over and the house of York is on the throne. Everyone has put aside the rigors of warfare for the pleasures of peacetime, except for Richard. He says he is not interested in such playfulness. Because he is physically deformed, he cannot see himself playing the role of courtier. Instead he commits to villainy. He plots to set King Edward against his brother George, Duke of Clarence, using as provocation the prophecy that someone with the letter G in his name will murder Edward's heirs.

Directly, George is led forth by soldiers on the way to the Tower to be imprisoned. Richard suggests that this is really the doings of the king's wife, Lady Grey, and that no one is safe from her treachery. Richard promises to intercede for Clarence, but as soon as he is led away, Richard reveals his true motive is to kill Clarence and get him out of the way.

Lord Hastings, who is the Lord Chamberlain, brings news of the king's sickness. This adds to Richard's desire to get George out of the way. Once the king is dead Richard believes he will be in a strategic position to take over the kingdom. He also plans to marry Lady Anne, Warwick's youngest daughter, even though he has killed her husband Edward and her father-in-law, King Henry VI.

ACT I, SCENE II

Lady Anne follows the hearse carrying the body of her father-in-law Henry VI. She mourns the deaths of Henry and his son Edward, her husband, and curses Richard who murdered them both. Richard demands that the procession stop, and Anne calls him a devil, saying that while he could kill Henry, he has no control over his soul. The wounds of Henry begin to bleed; this most unnatural act is caused by the presence of his murderer Richard.

Richard asks permission to tell his story. He claims that Anne's husband was actually killed by his brother Edward. He admits to killing Henry, but thinks he did him a service by sending him to heaven. Anne rails against Richard, saying he should go to hell, but Richard insinuates that she was the cause of the two deaths, since her beauty haunted his mind, and he was willing to do anything to win her. He says, that he, who never cries, has shed tears of longing for Anne.

Richard, who never speaks gentle words, now tries to move the heart of Anne. If he cannot convince her of his love, he would rather be dead. He gives her his sword, telling her to kill him. He confesses his crimes, but says it is her beauty that provoked him to do these deeds. Richard insists Anne must choose, either kill him or accept him. He will kill himself if she commands it. Anne relents even as she wonders about Richard's sincerity. However, she accepts his ring and leaves the funeral procession to await Richard at Crosby House.

Richard is overjoyed at his success, wondering if anyone has been successful in wooing a woman in such circumstances. How could Anne forget Edward, a royal prince with a wise and gracious nature, and choose Richard who killed him? He considers himself a wondrous handsome man to turn a woman's heart in such a way.

ACT I, SCENE III

At the palace Queen Elizabeth and two advisors, Rivers and Grey, discuss the health of the king. They are fearful Richard will be entrusted with the protection of the young son of King Edward. Meanwhile the king tries to reconcile the factions. Richard complains that he has been slandered by the Queen and those loyal to her. He blames them for the imprisonment of Clarence who fought for Edward's party.

Queen Margaret listens to their quarrel and condemns all of them. They turn on her, accusing her of crimes, scorning Richard's father and killing the baby Rutland. Margaret, hoping for justice, curses each person to suffer just as she has. She launches into a lengthy curse of Richard, but he interrupts, saying her name—claiming she curses herself. The company has no patience with her. She warns them they will remember this day when they feel Richard's treachery.

Richard plots with two murderers to kill Clarence. He plans to blame this murder on the Queen and her allies, Rivers, Dorset, and Grey. Derby, Hastings, and Buckingham will back Richard when he takes revenge. Meanwhile Richard will put on a pious face to cover his evil.

ACT I, SCENE IV

Clarence, imprisoned in the tower, has a fretful night, full of nightmares of death by drowning caused by his brother Richard. He begs his Keeper to stay with him so he can get some rest.

When the murderers enter with Richard's commission, they find Clarence sleeping and begin to consider the crime they have been sent to do. They are torn between conscience and greed. Clarence awakes and realizes they have come to kill him. He begs them to consider their own salvation and the reward that they can get from Richard. They tell him that Richard is in fact the murderer. One falters, but the other stabs Clarence and drowns him in a barrel of wine.

ACT II, SCENE I

King Edward, who is very sick, rejoices that he has united enemies and made alliances that will keep the kingdom in order after his death. Richard swears that he is committed to this peace. When Elizabeth asks the King to be reconciled to Clarence, Richard strikes with news of Clarence's death, killed by the order of the King, even though he had reversed it.

Edward is saddened that he had been so rash. He fears that this act of injustice will have serious repercussions. Richard tries to create new enmity between the two factions, insinuating that the Queen's allies actually killed Clarence.

ACT II, SCENE II

Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, realizes that Richard has killed Clarence and fears what will happen when the king is dead. Elizabeth enters to announce Edward's death. Elizabeth, the duchess, and the children of Clarence all proclaim sorrow, but the Duchess claims the greatest grief since she has lost the most with the death of her two sons. Elizabeth's advisors council to be moderate and to send for the young prince Edward so he may be crowned.

Richard enters to give his comfort and to confer with the others about the company to be sent to get the prince. Buckingham urges Richard to join in the embassy so they can plan how to separate the prince from the Queen's family.

ACT II, SCENE III

Several citizens discuss recent events—the death of Edward and promised reign of his son. They fear that this will be a dangerous time for the state since the prince is too young to rule and there is a strong rivalry between his uncles on both sides.

ACT II, SCENE IV

Richard, the young Duke of York, Queen Elizabeth, and the Duchess of York await the arrival of the prince. A messenger arrives to report that Lords Rivers and Grey and Sir Vaughan have been imprisoned on the orders of the Dukes Gloucester and Buckingham. Fearful of the outcome of this power struggle, Elizabeth decides to place herself and her son in sanctuary.

ACT III, SCENE I

Prince Edward arrives in London with Gloucester and Buckingham. Richard assures the prince that he does not recognize the treachery of his uncles and he is better off without them. Hastings arrives to report that the Queen will not allow the Duke of York to join his brother, the prince, and he and the Cardinal are sent to argue with her.

While they wait, Edward hears that he will stay at the Tower, even though he does not like the place. His brother, the Duke of York, arrives, escorted by the two ambassadors. It is clear that he feels insulted by Richard, and he mocks him as they talk. Richard and Buckingham surmise that his feelings arise from his mother's influence. Now they send an embassy to Lord Hastings so he will approve of the installation of Richard as king. For his part in this plot, Buckingham will be rewarded with land and goods.

ACT III, SCENE II

Hastings is drawn into Richard's net. Because he thinks he is safe as an ally of Richard and that his enemies will be executed in the Tower, he does not fear that two separate councils are being held. When Catesby queries if he will support Richard's bid for the throne, he refuses, saying he will not overthrow the legal line of inheritance from his master, the late king. Lord Stanley warns him not to be so confident—others were unsuspecting when disaster was about to strike.

ACT III, SCENE III

Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan are taken to their execution in Pomfret Castle. They remember the curse of Margaret that they would suffer for standing by while Richard killed her son. Their only hope is that her curse on Richard, Buckingham, and Hastings will also be heard.

ACT III, SCENE IV

The councilors meet in the Tower to discuss the date for the King's coronation. Hastings feels secure in Richard's loyalty. He believes that he can read Richard's heart through his appearance. Just then Richard returns and claims that his withered arm is a sign he has been bewitched by the Queen. When Hastings is slow to agree, Richard pronounces him a traitor and demands beheading immediately. Hastings also remembers the curse of Margaret.

ACT III, SCENE V

Hastings's head is brought in and Richard and Buckingham convince the Lord Mayor he was a traitor. Richard urges Buckingham to follow the Mayor to the City Hall, spread rumors that Edward's children are illegitimate, and that Edward is both a lecher, and illegitimate himself.

ACT III, SCENE VI

A scrivener, bearing the indictment for Hastings, says it took longer to write the document than it did for Hastings's fortunes to change. Bad things are happening in the world.

ACT III, SCENE VII

Buckingham returns from the City Hall, saying the citizens listened to his insinuations without a word. Finally, some of his men shouted that Richard should be king, and he took that as the general will. The Mayor waits outside to speak to Richard, and Buckingham counsels Richard to appear to be uninterested.

When the citizens enter, Richard pretends to be deep in prayer with two clergy and refuses to meet with them. Finally, after they have sent several messages, he appears before the group to see what they want. Buckingham acts as spokesperson for the group and offers Richard the throne as his lawful and legal due as a legitimate heir. Richard refuses several times, until finally Buckingham says that if he will not accept, Edward's son will never reign. A new family will be installed on the throne. Richard pretends to give in to the wishes of the assembled group, and he is proclaimed king.

ACT IV, SCENE I

Anne meets Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York at the Tower. They have come to visit with the young princes, but the guard refuses to let them enter. All visitors are barred by Richard's orders. Meanwhile Stanley arrives to take Anne to Westminster to be crowned queen. Anne remembers the curse she made that Richard's wife would know no peace. This has come true for her.

ACT IV, SCENE II

Richard, newly crowned king, complains to Buckingham that he cannot truly be king as long as young Edward lives. He wants Buckingham to consent to the execution of the princes, but Buckingham says he needs time to think.

Richard also decides that he wants to marry Edward's daughter. Because he must eliminate his wife first, he orders Catesby to spread a rumor that Anne is very sick. Richard believes things are out of control, but he has committed so many crimes he cannot turn back. He instructs Tyrrel, an assassin, to murder the princes. When Buckingham comes in and demands the land and possessions Richard had promised him for his loyalty, Richard refuses to hear him, saying, "I am not in the giving vein today." Buckingham thinks of what happened to Hastings and decides to leave the court while he still has his head.

ACT IV, SCENE III

Tyrrel reports that the bloody deed is accomplished and the two young princes are dead. Richard thinks he now has to marry the daughter of Edward so no one will be able to overthrow him. Just then news comes that Buckingham is mounting a challenge.

ACT IV, SCENE IV

Queen Margaret, lurking near the palace, learns of the destruction of her enemies. She thinks the deaths of Queen Elizabeth's sons repay the deaths of her husband and son, and she reminds Elizabeth how all things have come around so that she is no longer queen, mother, or wife, and has no subjects to do her will. Now she prophesies the death of Richard who has caused so many deaths. Elizabeth calls on Margaret to teach her how to curse Richard.

When Richard passes in procession, both Elizabeth and his mother, the Duchess of York, accuse him of committing many crimes. He listens impatiently, and then tries to convince Elizabeth to counsel her daughter to accept his suit. He uses devious arguments and Elizabeth relents.

Richmond is invading by sea, and Buckingham is joining with him in rebellion against Richard. Richard fears that Stanley will prove false too and join the forces against him. Later messengers arrive to report that a great storm has destroyed Buckingham's army, and he has been taken prisoner.

ACT IV, SCENE V

Stanley speaks with an ally of Richmond, saying that he would join him, except that Richard has imprisoned his son and he is powerless to do anything at the present time.

ACT V, SCENE I

As he is led to his execution, Buckingham remembers the day he cursed himself if he should prove false to King Edward and his children. He accepts the justice of his fate; his wrong acts have brought him to this end.

ACT V, SCENE II

At a camp near Tamworth, Richmond gathers his troops to attack Richard. The nobles speculate that Richard's allies only stay with him out of fear and soon will desert him.

ACT V, SCENE III

At Bosworth Field, Richard arrives with his troops and surveys the field while his tent is set up for the night. In another part of the field, Richmond gathers with his troops and sends a secret message to Stanley who plans to aid Richmond even as he appears to fight for Richard. As both Richmond and Richard sleep in different parts of the field, ghosts appear, cursing Richard and wishing Richmond good fortune. Richard wakes in a fearful mood, wanting to spy on his soldiers to see if they are loyal. Richmond, on the other hand, is rested, full of great confidence in victory. Each leader makes a speech to his soldiers, and then it is time for the battle. Richard learns that Stanley will not fight, but there is no time to kill his son—that must wait until after the fighting.

ACT V, SCENE IV

Richard is thrown from his horse but still refuses to leave the battlefield until he has met and killed Richmond.

ACT V, SCENE V

Richard and Richmond fight until Richard is killed. Stanley takes the crown from Richard's head and places it on Richmond, proclaiming him king. Richmond pledges to forge an alliance between the families of York and Lancaster by marrying Elizabeth and so heal the wounds of division in England.

BEFORE READING

These activities are designed to build students' background knowledge about the chronology of events, the historical persons, and the themes explored in the play. (Note: Consult other Teacher's Guides to Signet Classic editions of Shakespeare's plays; they contain many ideas that can be adapted to prepare students to read this play.)

A. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH A PROBLEM SITUATION

By getting students to think about how they might solve Richard's "problem," this activity prepares them to connect their own knowledge of human behavior, especially about ambition and abuse of power, with motives and behaviors they will discover in the play. Give students the following problem to write about and discuss in small groups:

1. You are Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, the third son of a duke who is killed in a civil war against Henry VI, the King of England. In revenge, you join with your brothers to overthrow the King and kill his son, leaving his wife, Lady Anne, a widow. Your oldest brother, Edward, has become the new King of England. However, Edward is dying, and you want to become the King when he is gone. There are some barriers to your ambition, though. King Edward has a wife, Queen Elizabeth, who has two brothers and two grown sons from a previous marriage. The King and Queen have two young sons, Edward and Richard, who are in line before you, and a pretty, young daughter, Elizabeth. And also, there is your popular older brother George, Duke of Clarence, who might stand in your way. Clarence has two children, Margaret and Edward.
2. Although you are intelligent and courageous in battle, you suffer from a physical deformity. You are of small stature, sinister looking, and have a crooked back that hunches you over and raises your left shoulder higher than your right. You have an aggressive attitude, a persuasive tongue, and are quick to argue or fight. You aren't interested in love or the benefits of peace. All you want is the ultimate power of kingship. How will you get it?
3. Write a plan for overcoming the obstacles before you and gaining kingship. Figure into your plan: Lady Anne, Queen Elizabeth and her daughter Elizabeth, your persuasive ability, the Tower of London, some unscrupulous nobles, and a couple of common murderers.
4. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to develop their plans for becoming King. After sharing in small groups, several students can share their plans with the whole class. The class can vote on the plan they think will be most similar to Shakespeare's play. Discuss why they chose a certain plan. Have students keep their writings, and after reading the play the students can see which plan is closest to Shakespeare's plot.

B. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INTERNET SEARCHES

To many students the history of Britain covered by *Richard III* is unfamiliar. One way to increase their familiarity is through searches on the Internet. Have students individually or in pairs conduct searches of the World Wide Web on historical topics related to the play. Then have the students make three-to-five minute presentations on their findings. In order to ensure the attention of the class to these reports, the presenters can ask the class review questions based on their presentations. Some of these questions can also be used in subsequent quizzes. It is usually helpful to have predetermined criteria for evaluating the student presentations, e.g., clarity, interest, use of visuals, and relevance of information for understanding the historical context of the play.

Possible topics and internet sites (found by searches on key words using the *AltaVista* search engine) include:

- **Britain's Monarchs**

This site lists Britain's monarchs from A.D. 802 to the present day. Individual biographies include links to genealogies, maps, and other resources. The monarchs in the Lancastrian Line, the Yorkist Line, and the House of Tudor are easily accessed.

- **The Battle of Bosworth Field**

Included here is a brief description that connects the battle with the prophecies of a Welsh monarch ruling Britain.

The Richard III Society (<http://www.r3.org/>) maintains this site and offers articles that discuss what is really known about the battle, battlefield images, and legends that surround the battle.

- **The Battle of Tewkesbury**

This site includes a vivid description of the battle along with details about the kind of fighting and weapons employed during this time in history.

- ***Richard III*, the movie, 1996**

Students will find film clips, graphic images from a film version of the play, set during World War II and directed by Richard Longraine.

C. STUDYING GENRE: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISTORY PLAY

1. Before reading any Shakespearean play, review with students their knowledge of other plays and conventions of the stage by having students list and compare the plays they already know. For example, have students generate titles of comedies and tragedies and discuss the type of action that usually occurs in these genres. What is the usual conflict in a comedy? in a tragedy? How do these kinds of plays usually end? What subjects are common to each genre? If students have read a history play, you can ask how histories compare to the other two genres in terms of subject, tone, and themes. If students have not read a history play, have them articulate ideas that come to mind from this term.

Look at p. lxiii in the Signet Classic edition of *Richard III* or a good handbook of literary terms for a clear definition of history plays. Then have students create a visual diagram that shows the characteristics each genre shares and how they differ.

2. Discuss with students the concept of historical writing. The following questions and activities can be used for writing or discussion:

Is history a collection of facts? How does a writer shape historical information? From two different history texts or nonfiction young adult sources, choose two descriptions of an historical person or event, for example, the causes of the Civil War in the U.S. or why Christopher Columbus wanted to discover a new route to the Indies. Compare the passages for different emphases and details. How can you explain the differences? How does the writers' interpretation affect the way history is presented?

3. A discussion about writing history might lead directly to a consideration of Shakespeare's motives in writing *Richard III*. These questions and activities can be used:

Review biographies of Shakespeare to piece together a sense of his political affiliations. What royal family was on the throne during the time Shakespeare was writing? Would he be likely to write to please them? What would be his advantages in doing so? What disadvantages could he expect if he did not write flattering histories of the royal family? What were conditions that worked for and against the theater during Shakespeare's time?

4. This would also be a good time to review the sources Shakespeare used as he wrote the play. Activities for students include:

Read the brief essay, "The Sources of Richard the Third" in the Signet Classic edition (pp. 151-52), and the excerpt from Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard the Third* (pp. 153-154). Advanced students could read all or parts of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (pp. 155-176). Outline the key events covered in the chronicles of Richard's life.

Role play: You are a playwright who has only the information included in the sources and you wish to create a portrait of Richard. What five events in his life would you choose? Which event would you emphasize and why? What other historical figures would you include in the play? What things would you definitely leave out and why? Compare your plans and determine what overall portrayal of Richard each of you would create. How are your portraits different or the same? What does this exercise suggest about the process of writing a story or play about an historical person?

D. INITIAL EXPLORATIONS OF THEMES

1. Before reading *Richard III* have students think about ideas of leadership and statecraft that were prevalent during the Renaissance and the development of the nation states. Activities for students include:

Renaissance humanists insisted upon the role of virtue in the leader's life to overcome Fortune and to build the best political environment. Choose a brief excerpt from Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* describing the perfectibility of the individual. Compare Pico's ideas to the pragmatic views of Machiavelli. Read the short section of Machiavelli's *The Prince* where he argues that a strong state needs a strong ruler who is crafty and amoral, willing to do whatever is necessary to promote the good of the state, that is, that the ends justify the means. Discuss how these two views promote different types of leadership. What are the benefits and disadvantages of each philosophy?

2. To make connections to the present day political scene, choose several contemporary leaders and read articles on these persons in magazines and newspapers, noting their decisions and behaviors. Questions to be discussed include:

Do political decisions seem to be based on principle or made for pragmatic ends? Which philosophy seems to rule the leaders' political behavior? How do you know? What are the benefits and disadvantages of each leader's style of political leadership?

3. In the play individual women interact directly with Richard while at other times a group of women act as a chorus, commenting on the events taking place. Richard has little respect for women ("Was ever woman in this humor wooed?/Was ever woman in this humor won?" Act I, ii, 227-228); he often speaks contemptuously of their moral character and emotional reactions. Richard feels he is superior in the "battle of the sexes" and prides himself on his ability to control and master the women he encounters. Richard, in fact, acts as a mouthpiece for many medieval views about women's natures—views which are still prevalent in contemporary culture. Students can explore these gender issues through several exercises (some of these exercises have been adapted from *The Harper and Row Reader, 3rd ed., 1992*, edited by Marshall W. Gregory and Wayne C. Booth).

These activities will get students talking about commonly held ideas about women's and men's roles and attributes. Return to this discussion as the class reads the play and identifies opinions of women's nature and abilities.

- a. Make two lists: the common personality traits of women and men. List all the terms on the board. Mark the traits viewed as positive and/or negative in contemporary culture. Discuss: Do males or females have more of the traits commonly considered to be positive? Why? What view of males/females arises from this listing of traits?
 - b. List slang words used to identify males/females (only terms suitable for a mixed group in a school setting). Which terms are positive/negative? What differences do you see between terms used for males/females? What do these differences suggest about the commonly held assumptions about gender differences?
 - c. Write a brief definition of "feminist." Is "feminist" a positive or negative term? Do a poll. Ask ten different women if they consider themselves "feminists" and why or why not. Record their responses for comparison and discussion. Ask ten different students for their definition of "feminist." Compare and discuss the responses as a class. Discuss: What is the common view of women's roles?
 - d. Skim newspapers for articles pertaining to women, women's rights, attitudes toward women. Create a profile of the "modern woman." What are commonly recognized positive traits for women? Negative traits? What overall view of women emerges from media coverage of women? What is the common view of women's nature today?
4. The true life of Richard III is shrouded in legend. Being sensitive to this issue will give students a greater appreciation of Shakespeare's purposes in writing the play.

Activities for students:

- Consider what you know about one or more other historical figures, for example, Daniel Boone, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar. Consult with your social studies teacher about historical figures you have recently studied. Gather all the information you can about one of these people. Mark the ideas you believe are factual and the ideas you think are legend or myth. Check the Internet, an encyclopedia, or other scholarly source to verify if you are correct in distinguishing between fact and legend. Discuss how many common notions about historical persons are actually myths. Discuss how legends grow up around historical persons and what purpose these legends serve.
 - Consider the legends surrounding the life of Richard III. Using at least two sources—again a reliable internet source or library resources—list the facts that are known about the life of Richard III. What legends have emerged about Richard? Discuss the reasons for each legend. Who would have told this story about Richard and what would have been the purpose?
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5. In the opening lines of the play, Richard declares he is a villain: "I am determined to prove a villain/ And hate the idle pleasures of these days" (Act I, i, 30-31). Other villains in Shakespeare's plays also declare their intention to do as much evil as possible; for example, Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Iago in *Othello*. In a small group, study other villains in Shakespeare's plays; list the characteristics of each villain and gather quotes from the plays that reveal their motivation. Compare these characters for similarities and differences in motivation. Are the characters interested in securing some personal rewards from their evil or do they simply enjoy inflicting chaos and pain on others? Discuss the nature of evil in humans.

Also on this theme, have students identify several villains from popular culture, as portrayed in films or books. Discuss: What motivates these characters? What reactions do storytellers expect from an audience when they create a villain? What happens if the audience is sympathetic to the villain?

This discussion could lead to an exploration of how Shakespeare expected his audience to react to Richard. The common idea of tragedy is that a good and noble person suffers a downfall because of a weakness or failure of judgment. Why did Shakespeare label this play a tragedy when the hero is an evil person? Discuss how Shakespeare uses the idea of tragedy in this play.

E. STUDYING SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

1. **Syntax:** Some of students' difficulties with Shakespearean language stem from the complex syntax used to create poetic effects. Choose some lines from the play. Rearrange the words in a more usual word order, then convert the embedded phrases and clauses into simple sentences. Add, change, or omit some of the words.

For example:

Act I, ii, 188-192:

Richard: That was in thy rage. Speak it again, and even with the word
This hand, which for thy love did kill thy love,
Shall for thy love kill a far truer love.

Act I, ii, 242-245:

Richard: A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
Framed in the prodigality of nature,
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
The spacious world cannot again afford.

2. **Rhymes:** Look at the way in which Shakespeare plays with syntax in order to create rhymes. Find other examples throughout the play.

Act I, ii, 263-264

Richard: Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass
That I may see my shadow as I pass.

Act III, vii, 232-235

Richard: Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all the impure blots and stains thereof;
For God doth know, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire of this.

Arrange some of the speeches in the play into rhyming couplets. Vary and omit words as necessary. Find others throughout the play.

Act III, iii, 24-25

Rivers: Come, Grey, come Vaughan, let us here embrace.
Farewell, until we meet again in heaven.

Rearranged:

Come, Grey, come Vaughan, let us here embrace.
Farewell, until in heaven we find grace.

Act III, iv, 58-61

Richard: I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
 That do conspire my death with devilish plots
 Of damned witchcraft, and that have prevailed
 Upon my body with their hellish charms.

Rearranged:

I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
 That do conspire my death with devilish verve
 By damned witchcraft, and that have prevailed
 Upon my body and with their hellish charms against me railed.

3. **Blank verse:** Although Shakespeare often used couplets, he more frequently employed unrhymed blank verse, a regular pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. Say aloud the ten syllables that follow, stressing each “dah”: da DAH da DAH da DAH da DAH da DAH. (In order to create this pattern, Shakespeare had to carefully consider the placement of each stress in the line. He would have to rearrange words in order to achieve the regular pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables that he desired.)

Read the section on blank verse in “Shakespeare: An Overview” by Sylvan Barnet (pp. xli-xliii). In this section Barnet shows how Shakespeare uses blank verse with variations. After reading and discussing this section, find examples of blank verse in *Richard III* and point out the iambs in each line as well as the variations.

Example: Act 2, i, 104-127

King Edward: Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
 And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave? ...

4. **Dramatic Irony:** Because of Richard's propensity to say one thing while meaning something else, usually something sinister, this play is full of dramatic irony. Formulate a definition of dramatic irony from your past experiences reading and seeing plays. (The effect of dramatic irony is to create tension and anxiety. In some cases the audience knows more about the situation than the unwitting character and, consequently, feels anxiety and pity for the character. At other times the use of irony allows the character to mask their real intentions, which are evident to the audience.) Look at several instances of irony in the play.

For example: Act I, ii, 26-28 Anne curses herself when she curses Richard's wife. Act I, iv, 4 Clarence predicts his own death when he says he won't live another night with such terrible nightmares. Identify other examples of dramatic irony. Write in pairs the lines containing dramatic irony on chart paper with an interpretation of the meaning of the lines. Create word maps in pairs including a definition of the term, nonexamples and valid examples of the term. Act out in pairs a brief scene using the ironic lines. Ask the class to explain what the lines really mean. Post charts and word maps and discuss the impact of this literary device on the reader and viewer of the play.

WHILE READING

These activities and writing prompts are designed to elicit students' initial responses and lead to analysis of the themes and ideas explored in the prereading activities.

A. GETTING DOWN INITIAL REACTIONS

1. As students are reading the play, have them discuss what they already know and also what they would like to know about the characters and the events of the play. Write these ideas on large chart paper so they can be displayed in the room. Use these lists to review what has happened, add additional information, and make connections as students learn more with each scene.
2. Using the prereading exercises about the purpose of history plays and the Renaissance idea of just rule, create charts on these two topics. As a gathering strategy for each day's discussion, consider these topics from their reading of the latest scene. What generalizations can they begin to make about Shakespeare's attitude toward the qualities a ruler should possess and the practices that should prevail in government.

B. READER RESPONSE

Students need to have the opportunity to express their initial reactions to the reading, based on their personal experiences and understanding of what they have read. Reader response writing encourages this type of personal, subjective response to the reading. Use open-ended questions, such as, how do you respond to the scene or what do you know about Richard? Ask students to choose the most important line in the section and explain why they consider it important. Or choose quotations and invite students to explain what it means to them. Tell students to write freely for three to five minutes about ideas the quotation brings to mind. Have students share their responses in pairs and then invite reactions as a way to start a whole-class discussion.

The following quotations may lead to rich responses:

ACT I

1. "And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days." (I, i, 28-31)
2. "Why, this it is when men are ruled by women." (I, i, 62)
3. "And I no friends to back my suit at all
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing" (I, ii, 235-237)
4. "But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ,
And seem a saint when most I play the devil. (I, iii, 333-337)
5. "Methought that Gloucester stumbled, and in the falling
Struck me (that thought to stay him) overboard
Into the tumbling billows of the main." (I, iv, 18-20)

ACT II

1. "Yet none of you would once beg for his life.
O god, I fear thy justice will take hold
On me and you, and mine and yours, for this!" (II, i, 132-134)
 2. "This is the fruits of rashness. Marked you not
How that the guilty kindred of the Queen
Looked pale when they hear of Clarence' death? (II, i, 136-138)
 3. "Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shape
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice! (II, ii, 27-28)
 4. "Better it were they [uncles] all came by his father,
Or by his father there were none at all;
For emulation who shall now be nearest
Will touch us all too near, if God prevent not." (II, iii, 23-26)
 5. "The tiger now hath seized the gentle hind;
Insulting tyranny begins to jut
Upon the innocent and aweless throne.
Welcome destruction, blood, and massacre!
I see, as in a map, the end of all." (II, iv, 50-54)
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ACT III

1. "Sweet Prince, the untainted virtue of your years
Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit;
Nor more can you distinguish of a man
Than of his outward show, which, God he knows,
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart." (III, i, 7-11)
2. "Now Margaret's curse is fall'n upon our heads,
When she exclaimed on Hastings, you, and I,
For standing by when Richard stabbed her son"
(spoken by Grey to Rivers, III, iii, 17-19)
3. "I think there's never a man in Christendom
Can lesser hide his love or hate than he,
For by his face straight shall you know his heart. (Spoken
by Hastings about Richard, III, iv, 51-53)
4. "Who builds his hope in air of your good looks
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep. (III, iv, 97-100)
5. "Here's a good world the while! Who is so gross
That cannot see this palpable device?
Yet who so bold but says he sees it not?
Bad is the world, and all will come to nought
When such ill dealing must be seen in thought. (III, vi, 10-14)
6. "Your brother's son shall never reign our king,
But we will plant some other in the throne
To the disgrace and downfall of your house" (III, vii, 214-217)

ACT IV

1. "Lo, ere I can repeat this curse again,
Within so small a time, my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words
And proved the subject of mine own soul's curse" (IV, i, 77-80)
2. "But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin." (IV, ii, 62-63)
3. "Oh thou well skilled in curses, stay awhile
And teach me how to curse mine enemies!" (IV, iv, 116-117)
4. "Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end" (IV, iv, 195)

ACT V

1. "That high All-seer which I dallied with
Hath turned my feigned prayer on my head
And given in earnest what I begged in jest." (V, i, 20-22)
 2. "He hath no friends but what are friends for fear,
Which in his dearest need will fly from him" (V, ii, 20-21)
 3. "There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul will pity me.
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?" (V, iii, 201-204)
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4. "Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe" (V, iii, 309-311)
5. "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (V, iv, 13)

C. STRATEGIES TO BUILD STUDENTS' DRAMATIC PRESENTATION SKILLS

Drama promotes and encourages students' oral development, kinesthetic body movement, the imagination and its connections to everyday experiences, and development of communication skills and public speaking skills. However, we are often disappointed when we ask students "to act" out a scene. Students are uncomfortable varying their voices, making gestures, or moving about the classroom. Students are embarrassed and we become frustrated, returning to videos, recordings, or whole-class group reading. Dramatic presentation skills must be taught, just like other reading, writing, and listening skills. Students need to be eased into dramatic presentations.

It is better to start with small scenes and more limited actions. Students will gain confidence and a comfort level, enabling them to risk more detailed dramatic presentations. Following is a list of strategies to use to develop students' speaking and acting skills:

1. **Reading for meaning:** Student one reads several lines of a character. Student two explains what the character "really" means.

Ex. Lady MacBeth: "Out, out damn spot."

Explanation: I've got to wash this blood off my hands or everybody will know that my husband killed the king.

Richard: "Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that loured upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Explanation: Our bad times are over and we have time to enjoy more pleasant things.

2. **Reading for dramatic action:** One student reads the lines of a particular scene or part of a scene while other members of the group pose as specific characters and perform the actions in pantomime, giving more meaning to the words. (Note: Students need time to plan this activity by reading the lines together and deciding on the best actions to convey the meanings of the lines. Students should also practice reading aloud to increase their ease and fluidity with the complex syntax of Shakespeare's language.)

Suggested scenes: Act I, ii where Richard woos the Lady Ann while she mourns her husband whom Richard has killed. Act I, iii, 338-356 and Act I, iv where Richard hires two murderers and they kill his brother Clarence. Act IV, ii where Buckingham falls out with Richard because he will not approve of killing the young prince Edward.

3. **Slide show:** Choose four key moments in a scene or part of a scene. Plan a fixed tableau to present each moment and then present the scenes in succession to the class. Each time you switch positions, call out "switch." The "audience" closes their eyes until the actors call out "open." This happens four times in succession creating a visual "slide show."
4. **Interview:** Interview another student who poses as a character in the play, for example, Lady Anne. It is important to remain in character and respond in ways that most naturally reflect the actions and words of the character in the play.
5. **Monologue:** In character, describe a particular locale in the play. Talk about the best/worst thing about living in this particular place. Talk about your daily life. Describe your relationship to other characters. This might be especially useful to contrast the natures of the two young princes: Edward, Prince of Wales, and Richard, Duke of York.

D. GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING DRAMA

1. Read speeches aloud to model for students how pauses, actions, and gestures add meaning to the words.
 2. Explain and model inflections and subtle voice changes to show how they affect how the lines of the play are interpreted by the audience.
 3. Encourage students to read plays aloud by giving them time to read short sections of scenes in pairs and small groups. This shows how important it is to hear the speech of characters in order to begin to understand their behavior and thinking.
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Exercise: Read the opening scene in *Richard III* where Richard describes the current political situation and his sense of himself and his plots. In groups of three plan a "performance" of this speech. One student/director directs the actor in voice changes and movements. Visualize the place where the speech will be delivered. Create a simple costume for Richard. Imagine a variety of places where Richard might be and a variety of ways in which he might deliver this speech.

After the performances: analyze how the differences in performance affect perceptions about Richard's character. Watch the opening scene from the film version of *Richard III*, directed by Richard Longrairie in 1995 for United Artists Pictures. Discuss the director's conception of Richard's character and situation in this version.

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Students' personal responses to the play can be deepened through small group and whole-class discussion. The goal of discussion is not to summarize the plot, but to try to understand connections between what characters say and do and their motivation and how all these actions taken together suggest Shakespeare's overall ideas about human social and political behaviors. You may want to use students' reader response reactions as the starting point of discussion or you may use some of the following questions to explore character, action, and symbolism more fully.

ACT I

1. What does Richard reveal about his character and motives in his opening speech?
2. What does Richard think of his brothers, King Edward and Clarence? What picture does Richard paint of Edward's character?
3. Why does Richard insinuate to Clarence that he shouldn't blame Edward for his imprisonment but the King's wife, Elizabeth?
4. Why is Hastings willing to ally with Richard?
5. Explain Anne's change of heart toward Richard. What does this scene between Anne and Richard show about Richard's personality?
6. What do you learn about the political situation in Edward's court?

What opportunities does this situation present to Richard? What could be Shakespeare's purpose in painting this picture of Edward's reign?

7. What strategies does Richard use to set his plots in motion? Why are they so effective?
8. Why does Shakespeare bring Queen Margaret into Edward's court?
What do the reactions of Richard, Queen Elizabeth, Hastings, Buckingham, Rivers, and Dorset reveal about their characters?
9. Why is Clarence having nightmares? What are his fears?
10. What is the purpose of the lengthy conversation, first between the two murderers and then the murderers and Clarence? How do you feel when you are reading or viewing this scene?

ACT II

1. How does Richard use his information about Clarence's death to further his plots?
 2. Explain Edward's reaction to the news of Clarence's death. What sense of justice does Edward suspect is in control of the lives of all his family and allies?
 3. What could be Buckingham's motive in suggesting that the young prince be brought to London with "some little train"?
 4. What is the role of the women and children in this act?
 5. Why does Shakespeare include a scene where the citizens discuss the political situation?
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ACT III

1. Compare Hastings' speech in III, iv, 48-53 with his speech in III, iv, 95-100. What has Hastings realized by the end of the scene?
2. List the people who die by Richard's orders in Act III. What does each of them realize as they die? What does this suggest about the idea of justice presented in the play?
3. How does Buckingham's speech in III, vii, 24-41 support the Scrivener's speech at the beginning of the scene? What other characters in this scene act in ways that bear out the Scrivener's speech?
4. How does Buckingham in III, vii live up to the boast he makes in III, v, 5-12?

ACT IV

1. What does Anne realize about her relationship with Richard?
2. Why is Richard still not satisfied even when he is crowned king?
3. Why is Buckingham reluctant to do Richard's bidding when it comes to killing the young prince when he has been willing to go along with all the other plots?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Margaret's idea of retributive justice and why?
Must death be answered by death or is there another way justice can come about?
5. Do you think Richard's arguments to get Elizabeth to woo her daughter in his name work? Why or why not?

ACT V

1. What differences do you see between the camps of Richard and Richmond? What do they suggest about the right order of leadership?
2. What is the impact of the visits of the ghosts to Richard and Richmond?
3. Compare the speeches of Richmond and Richard to their troops before the battle. What do their choices of words and arguments suggest about the personalities of the two men?
4. What is Richard's reaction when the fighting seems to be going against him? What does his reaction show about his character? Has Richard changed in the course of the action in his motivation or dedication?
5. In the end is Richard totally evil or does his portrayal suggest any admirable traits? Defend your point of view.

AFTER READING

After reading the play and discussing various themes, students are ready to engage in activities that will deepen their interpretation, help them see connections between the play and other literary works, and provide a creative outlet.

A. DEEPENING INTERPRETATION

1. Students can return to their reports on historical persons and events prepared in the prereading phase and list characters who either appeared or were referred to in *Richard III*. Students can explain orally or make charts that show how Shakespeare changed or used the historical information in the play. (This exercise can lead to a discussion about historical fiction, biography, and autobiography.)
2. Compare coverage of a current story, especially one dealing with national politics, in a local newspaper to one from the state, one from the region, and the *New York Times*. Examine how all information is shaped by the writers and the editorial policy decisions of the publishers.
3. Queen Margaret has the role of prophetess in the play, but like Cassandra in *The Iliad*, her warnings are ignored. In small groups list all of Margaret's predictions and the events that fulfill her predictions. Research stories of other prophets, male and female, and their role as teachers about human's relationship to God and the right relationship among humans.

4. In a lighter vein, look at the rhetoric of Margaret's curses. What types of insults does she create, and why are they offensive? Create insults for characters in the play, using Margaret's tactics.
5. Richard displays his fullest command of deceit and guile in the scene where he woos Lady Anne, drawing her away from duty, loyalty, and virtue while binding her to him. Analyze his arguments and his ability to mask evil under the guise of piety. Compare this "seduction" scene to the later scene where the citizens of London are drawn in by similar stratagems. Analyze Richard's strategies.
6. Look at films showing villains using trickery and deceit to dupe their victims; for example, the film, *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988, Directed by Stephen Frears) has several examples of cold-hearted manipulation of another for the sheer sake of villainy. Discuss what makes the villain so powerful; why are people drawn in by the villain's treachery?

B. GROUP PROJECTS

1. In 1997 Roscoe Cooper and illustrator Timothy Basil Ering created a picture book, *The Diary of Victor Frankenstein*, which is supposed to be a photographic facsimile of the original diary of Victor Frankenstein (DK Publishing). Using this text as a model, create a diary or journal for Richard III, based on information in Shakespeare's play or research drawn from historical sources.
2. Write a journal entry for Richard on the night before the battle at Bosworth Field. As he settles in his tent that night, Richard asks for wine and ink and paper. Imagine you are Richard and write a journal entry he might write on this night.
3. Research legends about the Battle of Bosworth Field, August 22, 1485. Go back to the play to see where Shakespeare uses the legend and how. Discuss the legends about Richard that Shakespeare chose not to use and speculate about why.
4. What really happened to the two young princes? Conduct research using internet and conventional sources and develop a theory. Two important sources are Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard III*, republished in 1975, and A.J. Pollard, *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower*. The Richard III Society has an excellent web page that links to many discussions of this issue.
5. An interesting group project is to explore the film versions of *Richard III*. Use information in the essay, "*Richard III on Stage and Screen*," (Signet Classic, pp. 232-245) and internet research. Divide the class into three groups to watch each one of the three most significant film versions, Olivier's, Pacino's, and Longgraine's. Report on the director's choices in setting, staging, and adhering to Shakespeare's play in each film version. Each group shows the class a key scene that reveals Richard's character most clearly or the director's intention in portraying Richard.

Richard III, 1955, directed by Laurence Olivier. VistaVision.

Richard III, 1995, directed by Richard Longgraine. United Artists Pictures.

Looking for Richard, 1996, directed by Al Pacino.

6. The 1995 production of *Richard III*, directed by Richard Longgraine, is a stunning version of the play set in the post WWI period. Take the time to view the entire film, to see excellent acting and to catch all the uses of period costumes and setting from 1930s England. Create your own version of Richard III. Videotape and present one scene to the whole class for comparison and discussion.
7. Research Shakespeare on the Internet and report interesting or novel information to the class. Mr. William Shakespeare (<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>) is an excellent site at which to begin. The goals of the site are "To be a complete annotated guide to the scholarly Shakespeare resources available on the Internet" and "To present new Shakespeare material unavailable elsewhere on the Internet." Especially useful links include biography, the Renaissance, and theater.

C. READING OTHER LITERATURE AND BOOKS CONNECTED TO THE THEMES OF THE PLAY

1. Read another Elizabethan play, *Doctor Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe, written around 1592 (Signet Classic, 1969) and compare the downfall of Doctor Faustus to Richard III. Mephistopheles, a minion of Lucifer, tempts Faustus to give his soul to the devil, and there is a struggle between good and evil angels for the soul of Faustus. Is there anything similar in Richard III? Why or why not?
 2. Explore evil and villains in YA books (see the bibliography). At the "book pass-around," take three minutes to survey the novel and read a page or two. Pass the book to the next reader. After everyone has had a chance to survey all the books, list the books you'd like to read in order of preference. In a reading circle, decide on a reading schedule and how to read
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the novel. You may choose buddy-reading, where group members read aloud alternate pages. You may prefer to combine silent reading with oral reading of sections. Respond to your reading by writing reactions and sharing them with group members. Make your reactions open-ended. Keep a double-entry journal with significant passages from the reading and interpretation of them. The passage goes on one side of the paper and the commentary on the other.

3. Extend your understanding of the play and the historical period by reading novels which deal with *Richard III*. On the website run by the Richard III Society (<http://www.r3.org/>), there is a site, "In Pursuing the White Boar: Approaches to Teaching *Richard III*," by Richard Oberdorfer. The author lists several novels dealing with *Richard III* and also essays discussing how to adapt the novels to classroom use. Some of the novels cited will prove especially interesting to students. They include: *The Wizard's Shadow* by Susan Dexter, a fantasy novel which casts Richard as a hero not a villain; *The Dragon Waiting* by John M. Ford, another fantasy which also provides historical accuracy; and *The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey, a detective novel which questions the historical accuracy of the traditional view of Richard as a villain. Reading these novels may excite students to do further research on the myths and truths concerning the person of *Richard III*.

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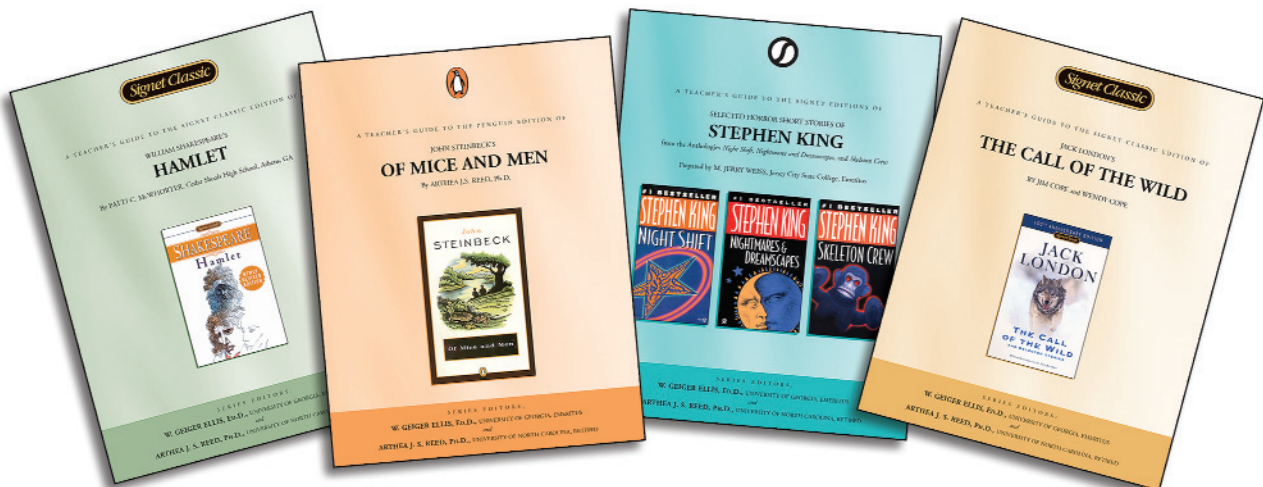
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