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 **Prestwick House**
Activity Pack
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Richard III
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE


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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: _____

During Reading**Character Log**

Objective: Keeping a character log on Richard III

Activity

As the play progresses, the reader gains more insight into Richard III's personality. His character is revealed through other characters' observations in addition to his own actions and words. As you read, keep a character log on Richard. In the left column, note any of his significant or interesting actions or speeches, as well as any insightful observations others make about him. In the right column, comment on what each entry in the left one tells you about Richard's character. If you quote directly from the book, remember to record act and scene numbers and the speaker along with your quotations.

You must make a minimum of two log entries per act. A sample log entry (from Act I, Scene I) is provided for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I, Scene III**Critical Thinking**

Objective: Thinking critically about social norms and laws

Activity

In this scene, Queen Margaret berates the nobles associated with the House of York:

“Hear me, you wrangling pirates, that fall out
In sharing that which you have pill’d from me!”

Margaret is angry because Richard and others in the House of York killed her husband, King Henry VI, and their children. During medieval times, when a king was assassinated, his children were as well; but, often, women were left alive because they were not seen as a threat to the incoming power. Thus, Margaret is in the unfortunate situation of having to live alongside the people who killed her family. In today’s society, such an idea seems absurd. In the U.S., however, there have been laws and customs (past and present) that have created resentment among people.

Compile a list of no fewer than ten laws or customs in our society that you feel are or were unfair to individuals or specific groups of people. Be prepared to share your responses in a class discussion.

Example: the law that denied women the right to vote or own land

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 II**Bad Omens**

Objectives: Making predictions about the story
Understanding the use of omens in literature

Activity

This scene opens with Lord Stanley's messenger arriving at Hastings's home, waking him up in the middle of the night. Lord Stanley has had a nightmare that he believes should be a warning to Hastings. The messenger states:

He dreamt to-night the boar had razed his helm:
Besides, he says there are two councils held;
And that may be determined at the one
Which may make you and him to rue at the other.
Therefore he sends to know your lordship's pleasure,
If presently you will take horse with him,
And with all speed post with him toward the north,
To shun the danger that his soul divines.

Stanley believes his dream is a bad omen because Richard's heraldic symbol is the boar, and the clear indication of the dream is that Richard has bad intentions for Stanley and Hastings. Stanley encourages Hastings to leave London with him, away from Richard's influence. Hastings continues to maintain faith that Richard can be trusted, so he ignores the words of caution.

Writers use omens and prophecies to help create suspense. An omen can be good, or it can suggest that something terrible will occur, which causes the reader to anticipate the moment when it will happen.

Think of five movies, television shows, books, or plays that feature an omen or a prophecy. Then, complete the following chart. In the first column, write the name of the work. In the second column, quote or paraphrase the omen or prophesy, and in the third column, write what it foretold. An example is provided for you.

When you have completed the chart, write down three things that you think Stanley's dream foreshadows.

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 IV**Mapping the Battle**

Objectives: Plotting the locations of an historical battle
Connecting to an event in the play visually

Activity

Richard's quest to gain power at all costs has caught up with him. Noblemen throughout England are gathering forces and beginning to advance. Richmond has left France and is making his way toward England.

The fight that is about to ensue has been building throughout the play. The hope for many of the characters has rested on Richmond's gathering forces in France, moving them across the sea, and challenging Richard on the battlefield. Most of them anticipate that Richmond will be victorious and assume the throne of England.

In Act IV, Scene IV, Richmond's armies are on the move. Richmond and his army have to maneuver a great deal of territory in order to engage Richard in battle. To gain a better understanding of how far his men have to travel, plot the movement of Richmond's army until it reaches Richard's camp. Use the text to find the geographical locations mentioned in the play from when Richmond leaves France to when he and Richard engage in battle at Bosworth Field. Plot each location on the blank map provided. You might need to find the locations online or in other geographical resources.