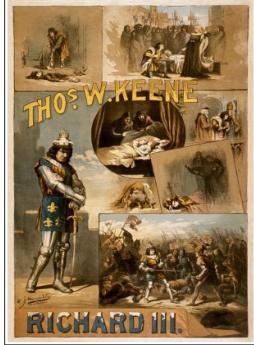




What happens in the play?

1. Read the summary of Shakespeare's play Richard III and briefly rephrase in your own words what happens: what crimes could Richard be accused of? Make a list of all the charges that could be held against him.

List of charges held by William Shakespeare against Richard III:



- He betrayed his brother Clarence so he was sent to prison (without his knowing it was because of Richard) and hired assassins to kill him while he was there.
- He killed the husband (and father-in-law actually) of Anne Neville, before marrying her.
- As he became Lord Protector after the death of his brother the king (Edward IV), he locked up his nephews, Edward V and his brother, in the Tower of London.
- Then he told everybody they were illegitimate children, so he could access the throne instead.
- He eventually had the "Princes in the tower" killed.
- He sent Hastings to jail (and had him killed).
- He suffered from physical deformity (he was notably pictured as a hunchback).
- He was evil.
- He had Buckingham killed.
- Before killing the sons of the Queen (Elizabeth Woodville, his late brother the King's wife), he had gotten rid of her brothers (and who knows, maybe of the King himself).
- Richard killed his wife, so he could court and try to get married to his niece (to secure the throne).
- Basically, he is accused of killing anybody who disagrees with him and might prevent him from usurping the throne.

2. Does the summary help you understand all the abuse regarding his physical appearance?

Why does Shakespeare insist upon the way he looks?

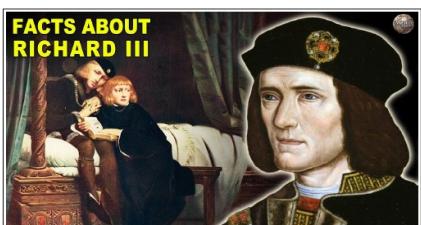
To what extent does it account for a specific vision of the cosmos in the Renaissance?

His inhumanity is supposed to show physically ("inner crookedness represented externally" "disability caused by inner evil"). The Renaissance insists on the connection and reflection of all elements: inner worth is supposed to show externally, and human (dis)order is echoed by natural (dis)order.

Historical investigation

3. Let's check the historical and scientific veracity of some of the charges held by Shakespeare against Richard III with the following video, entitled "Facts about Richard III: History's Most Reviled King." (01:04-06:27 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzntL4tn3II>)

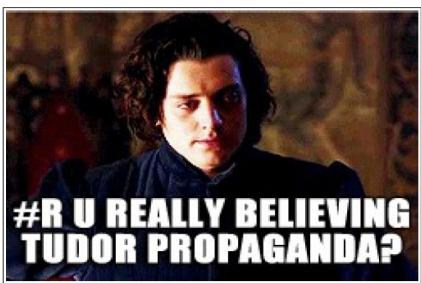
Which charge(s) have actually been proven true by historians and scientists?



Richard had his nephews declared illegitimate and he imprisoned them in the Tower of London (under the guise of protection): that is the only thing historians know for sure. Actually, he probably wasn't a hunchback. If the blood of his nephews might be on his hands, there is no historical evidence. He was accused of killing his wife, but tuberculosis is the most likely culprit. And despite rumours that Richard killed his wife to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York, he never made a move on her – on the contrary he courted Princess Joana of Portugal.

4. Spot at least one joke in the video (whether you find it funny or not).

Examples: Parking over 24hrs, that's going to be a big fee; Locking up children in the tower is not good PR (public relations) ; Children have been discovered in a chamber that had been walled-up > not a good place to grow up in ; Repetition of "illegitimate" ; Richard's courting of Joana hit a snag when he died on the battlefield.



5. Let's try and answer Hastings's question: "WHY [IS RICHARD] SO EVIL?". In other words, why does Shakespeare portray him as a monster more than one century after his death (1593)?

Shakespeare wrote his play under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the granddaughter of Henry Tudor, who became King Henry VII after defeating Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field. The idea behind Tudor propaganda is to legitimize the Tudor dynasty by portraying the previous king as devilish ("Eager to legitimize the Tudor dynasty, propagandists denounced Richard as a devilish usurper").

6. How does the play Richard III by Shakespeare demonstrate the performative power of words, here overpowering history and science?

Through his play, Shakespeare created the monstrous image we still have of Richard III, without concerns for historical truth.