

Propaganda in Shakespeare's time; *Richard III*

Topic

Propaganda in Shakespeare's time; Richard III

Learning outcomes

- Develop reading for information skills
- Infer the meaning of new vocabulary by its context
- Look at how Shakespeare used propaganda in his writing

Age group and level

Adult B1- B2

Time

75 minutes

Materials

- Student worksheet 1 – Warmer (1 copy each)
- Student worksheet 2 – Predict the story (1 shared copy for pairs)
- Student worksheet 3 – Jigsaw reading (half the class will have text A, the other half text B)
- Presentation – This can replace worksheet 1 and 2

Introduction

This lesson provides students with information about Shakespeare's history play *Richard III* and raises awareness of how Shakespeare used propaganda to portray King Richard III as an evil tyrant. Students will complete a jigsaw reading activity where they read a text about propaganda in Shakespeare's times and a review of a book about Richard III.

Procedure

<p>1. Warmer – Talking about propaganda (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put learners into small groups. Display slide 2 or give out Worksheet 1. Ask groups to read and answer the questions together. Answers: Poster 1 is North Korean, Poster 2 is British. See Appendix 1 for a full commentary on the posters. Following up by eliciting what propaganda means. Accept any reasonable definitions. Check and drill pronunciation if necessary: /,prɒpə'gandə/ <p>Answer: Propaganda is the spreading of information (which is not always true) to help and support a political cause. There are several recognised propaganda techniques, including exaggeration, telling half-truths and demonising the enemy.</p>
<p>1. Task 1 – pre-reading quiz (5 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep learners in groups and explain that they are going to read about propaganda in Shakespeare's times, but that first they are going to take part in a short quiz. Display slide 3 or ask learners to look at their worksheet and answer the questions. Conduct feedback, awarding points for correct answers. <p>1. Answers: C (Shakespeare lived from 1564 until 1616; Elizabeth was queen of England from 1558 until 1603.); 2. A; 3. C; 4. C; 5. C</p>
<p>2. Task 2 – predicting with pictures (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain to the students they are going to see some pictures of things and people mentioned in reading texts and predict how they are connected. Ask learners to work in pairs. Display slide 4 or give out worksheet 2 Ask them to describe what they see and encourage them to make predictions about what they are going to read. Give them 2 minutes, then elicit ideas. It is not necessary to provide the correct answers, as students should be able to arrive at these independently after doing the next tasks.

3. Jigsaw reading (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display slide 4 again • Divide the class into two halves: ask one half to read Text A and the other Text B. The texts are on the final two pages of the student worksheet. • Allow students to work with a partner to answer the questions on their chosen text. Monitor, offering support where necessary. • Elicit feedback from the whole group. See Appendix 2 for the answers to the questions.
2. Task 4 – discussion (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When students have finished reading, ask them to work with someone who has read the other text and tell them what they have read. • Students should work together to discuss the connection between the texts and the pictures (slide 4 or worksheet 2) and to find and identify all the different examples of propaganda in the text. • Elicit feedback from the group <p>Examples of propaganda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — plays were a way of reinforcing the Queen’s power — a song about the Queen’s wisdom and goodness — an acting group which promoted Protestantism — plays which prepared the country for war — Shakespeare’s portrayal of Richard III — Thomas More’s portrayal of Richard III.
3. Task 5 - Vocabulary: inferring meaning (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display slide 5 or write the following on the board: • 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) • Text B • g. megalomaniac (paragraph 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • h. set the record straight (paragraph 2) • i. malicious (paragraph 3) • Ask students to find and underline the words in the text • before matching them to their definitions.
4. Definitions (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either display slide 6 or read out the definitions one by one while learners try in pairs to match the definition with a word or phrase: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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) • Allow students to check their answers with a partner before collecting answers around the class. <p>Answers</p> <p>1. subversive 2. malicious 3. portray 4. megalomaniac 5. committing treason 6. promoted 7. put on 8. set the record straight 9. the masses</p>
5. Task 6 – discussing propaganda techniques (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put learners into groups and display slide 7. Or read out the rubric and questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Think of a character from history who you all know about. Discuss the following questions: — What do you know about this character? — What words come to mind when you think of this character? Why do you think this is? — Did propaganda help to create a certain image of this character? How did this work? • Ask learners to discuss the questions in groups for 5 minutes, offering support where necessary. Have the names of some other historical characters (e.g. Stalin, Mao, Tito, Winston Churchill, etc.) ready in case your students don't have any ideas. <p>Note: If possible ask students to find images or propaganda posters of the historical characters online.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then nominate a few groups to report back. Check with the rest of the class if they agree with each group's answers.
6. Extension (30 minutes)	Ask learners in groups to design an Elizabethan propaganda poster to advertise Shakespeare's play, <i>Richard III</i> . They present the poster to the rest of the class and talk about the propaganda techniques which helped them to create it.

Edited by Suzanne Mordue

Appendix 1 – Commentary on the posters

The first is a **North Korean** government propaganda poster of fairly recent design. It shows military personnel standing shoulder to shoulder with fists raised, perhaps looking at an enemy, as if to suggest how strong North Korea's military is. The yellow hammer, brush and sickle is a Communist symbol representing industry, the arts and agriculture.

The second poster is **British** and was produced during the First World War (1914–18). Its aim was to encourage men to enlist for the First World War. It imagines a scene in the future and portrays the shame of a man who did not enlist as his children ask him what he did for his country. The poster appeals to the pride of men, while portraying the war as a heroic duty which every man should be proud to undertake.

Appendix 2 – Answers to jigsaw reading

Text A:

- To entertain and also to teach audiences.
- With a song about the Queen's wisdom and goodness
- That Protestantism was good, and Catholicism was bad. It also aimed to prepare the country for war against the Catholics in Europe
- Evil
- Queen Elizabeth's ancestors had killed King Richard, and she would have been angry if Shakespeare had portrayed him in a positive way.
- King Richard III, Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare, the play *Richard III*, the theatre.

Text B:

- a.** The King's Grave
- b.** They wanted to show that there was more than one side to King Richard/to show that he was a complex person
- c.** From sixteenth-century writer Thomas More
- d.** Underneath a car park in Leicester
- e.** Langley thinks that Richard III didn't kill his nephews; Jones thinks he probably did
- f.** King Richard III, his nephews, Shakespeare, the car park, the book *The King's Grave*, the theatre.