



A Critical Study of Shakespeare's History Plays

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Abstract

This paper critically evaluates William Shakespeare's historical plays, which are distinctive in their depiction of past events, their dramaturgy, and their impact on the development of historical drama. Shakespeare's history plays—those that describe the reigns of English kings—have shaped how history is represented on the stage for centuries. This study intends to open up the literary, as well as political dimensions of these texts and to analyse them from a perspective that takes into account questions about power, kingship, and issues of identity and national recognition. In discussing some examples—*Richard II*, *Henry IV* (Parts 1 and 2), *Henry V*, and *Richard III*—the question is raised how Shakespeare's treatment of history in his writings is used to entertain audiences while providing a window through which wider reflections on leadership and authority can be made for late Elizabethan and predominantly Jacobean England.

