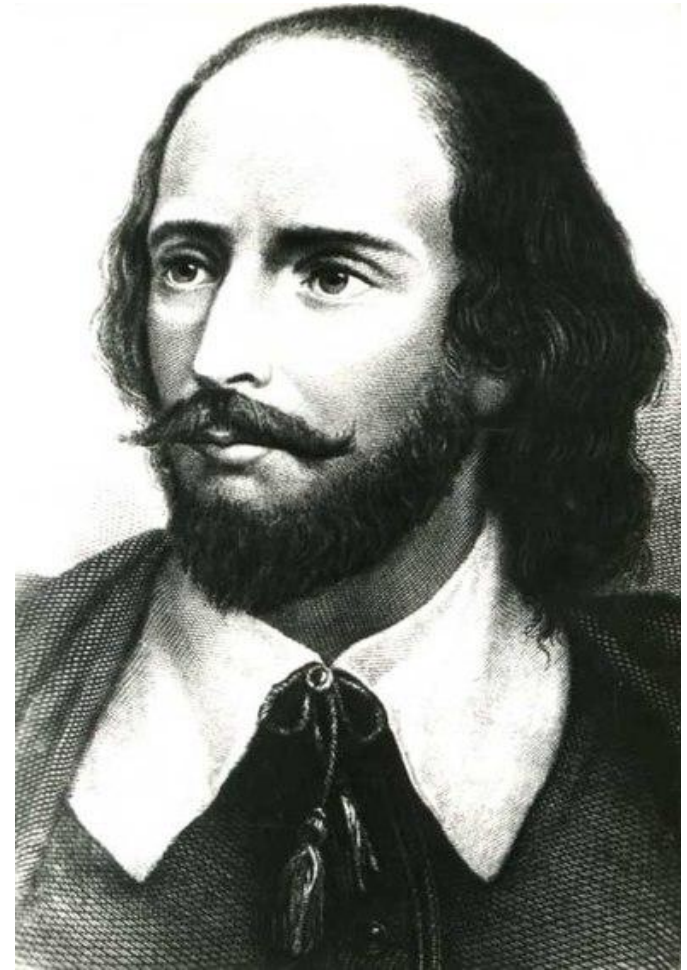




Shakespeare's History Plays

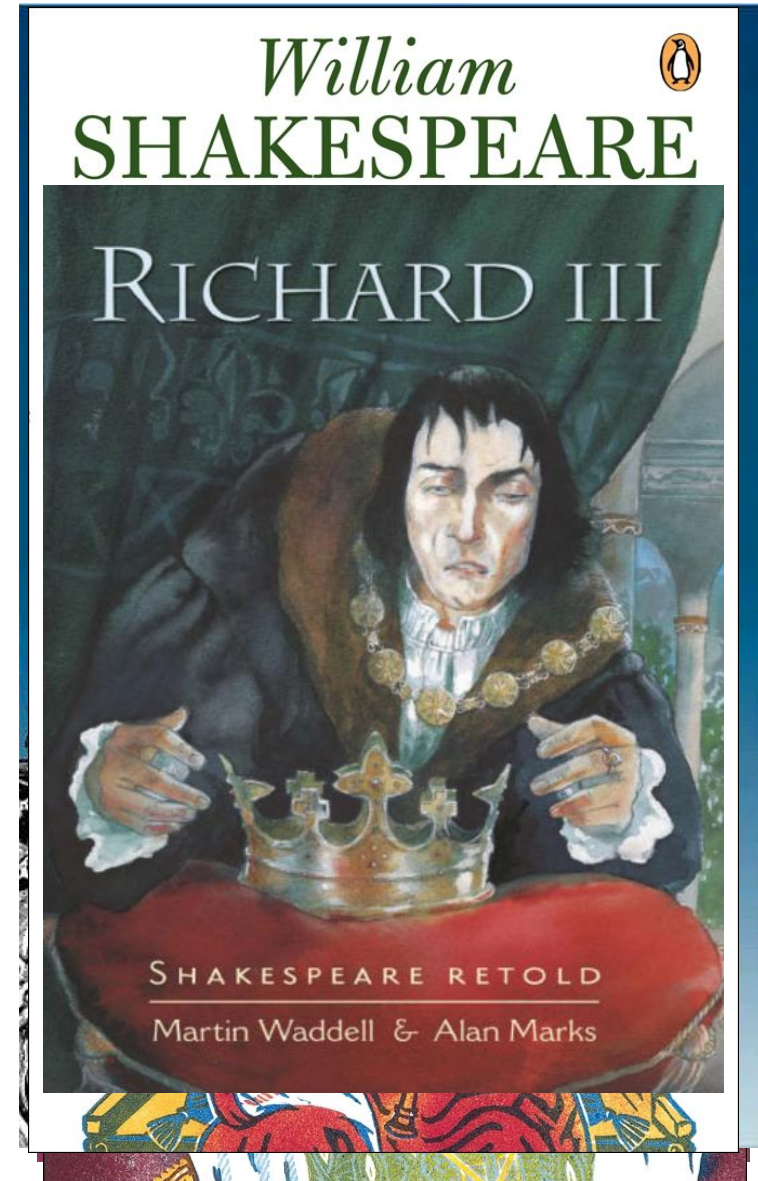
Introduction

- Most of the plays have an historical element – the Roman plays, for example, are historical but scholars don't refer to those Roman plays (Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus etc.) as history plays. The plays that we normally mean when we refer to the 'history' plays are the ten plays that cover English history from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, and the 1399-1485 period in particular. Each play is named after, and focuses on, the reigning monarch of the period.



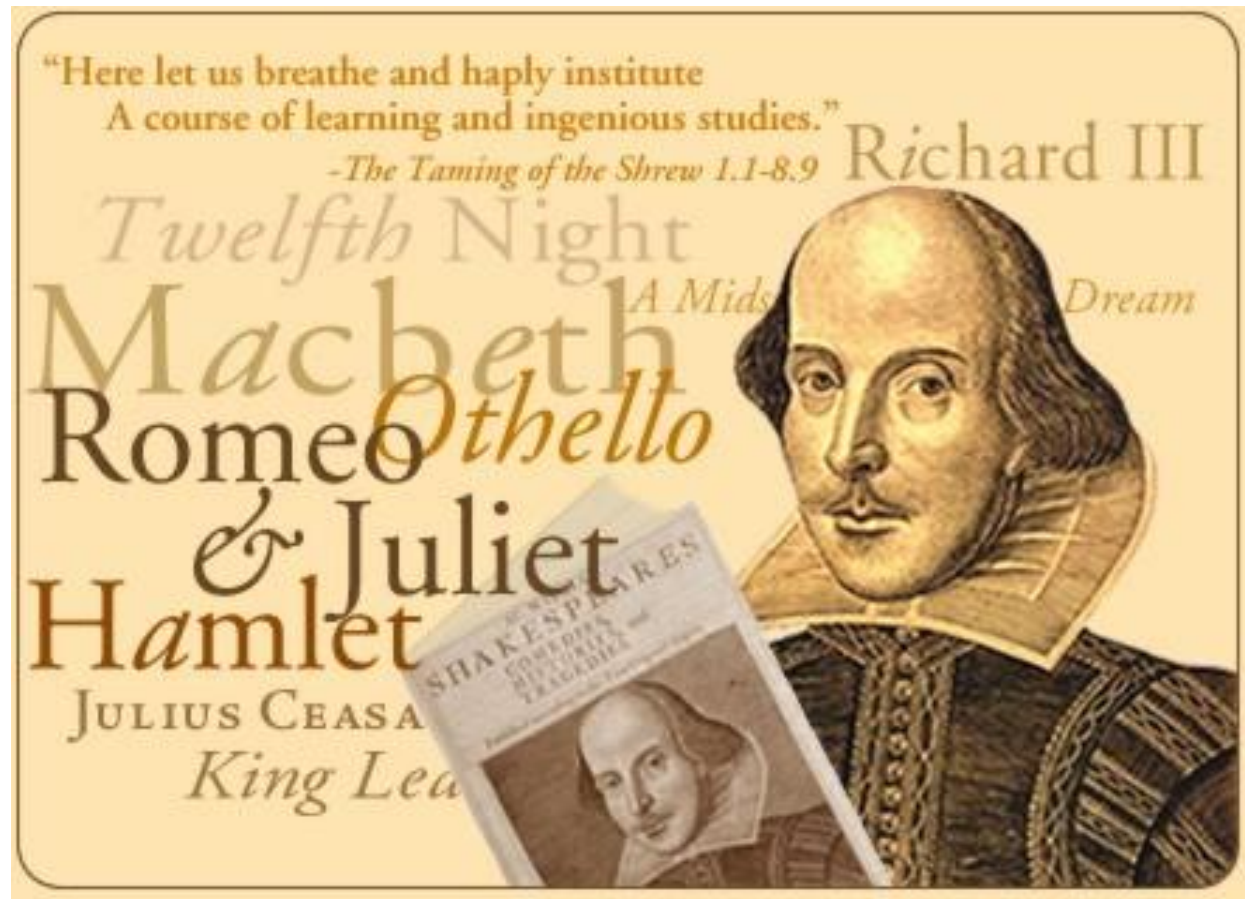
List of Shakespeare's History Plays

- In chronological order of setting, these are Henry IV Part 1-2, Henry V, Henry VI Part 1-3, Henry VIII, King John, Richard II, Richard III.
- The plays dramatise five generations of Medieval power struggles. For the most part they depict the Hundred Years War with France, from Henry V to Joan of Arc, and the Wars of the Roses, between York and Lancaster.



Not just a writer

- In fact, the popular perception of mediaval history as seen through the rulers of the period is pure Shakespeare. We have given ourselves entirely to Shakespeare's vision.



Content of plays

- The history plays are enormously appealing. They give insight into the political processes of Mediaval and Renaissance politics and they also offer a glimpse of life from the top to the very bottom of society – the royal court, the nobility, tavern life, brothels, beggars, everything.



Conclusion

- Shakespeare was writing 'history', using historical figures and events, what he was really doing was writing about the politics, entertainments and social situations of his own time. A major feature of Shakespeare's appeal to his own generation was recognition, something Shakespeare exploited relentlessly.

