

King richard iii and looking for richard essay sample



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Shakespeare's play King Richard III and Al Pacino's documentary Looking for Richard are two texts composed more than 400 years apart that can be linked through their themes and techniques. The influence of these themes or values however, is subject to the context of the audience. Both texts explore the characterisation of the main character Richard and how he is presented. They explore the craft of performance, presenting two different approaches to acting and ownership of the actor.

The theme of ambition is also prominent in the opening scenes of the texts as audience members are both implicitly and explicitly presented the objectives of the composers and Richard throughout the productions. Due to the mediums of the texts these themes are conveyed using different devices available to plays and documentaries respectively. Shakespeare relies of soliloquies and strong religious reference to establish the importance behind Richard's plots, the over dramatic representation of Richard as a deformed cripple insights humour and alliance with Queen Elizabeth.

Al Pacino instead uses voxpopuli and explanations of the play, as it develops to ensure audience members are able to understand Shakespeare's intended purpose in a contemporary setting. The storyline is also altered through certain omission and additions highlighting certain aspects of the plot to suit his objective. It is important also to note the differing purposes of the two texts when considering not only links between them but also their differences. Context, medium and purpose With a different context the need to present a text in a different medium arises.

It is for this reason that Shakespeare's play is explored and enhanced through a documentary. Al Pacino, in attempting to reconnect a contemporary audience with Shakespeare and his insight into the 'human condition', creates a text that can be described as 'meta theatre' or theatre talking about theatre. Looking for Richard recognises that in order to create relevance the "4th wall" as it is often coined needs to be removed. Shakespeare in contrast, targeting his play at an Elizabethan audience, created King Richard III as a propaganda piece for Queen Elizabeth, establishing the legitimacy of her reign.

He aimed to charm and entertain the audience through language and the discussion of relevant issues surrounding morality, conscience and deceit. This focus on entertainment is common to both texts however, is presented differently in order to be effective. Characterisation of Richard the protagonist, played by Al Pacino in Looking for Richard is immediately established to be a deformed character. Shakespeare opens King Richard III with a soliloquy discussing Richard's appearance and motivations: "Cheated of feature by dissembling nature, Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time

Into this breathing world scarce half made up" Richard's attitude to the current peace in England conveys much of his nature to the audience being un-content with the situation, a theme explored by Al Pacino. Richard in his soliloquy explains: "And therefore since I cannot prove a lover To entertain these fair well-spoken days, I am determined to prove a villain" His self-reflexivity and predetermination of later acts establishes a connection between the audience and Richard, an objective also of Al Pacino who recognises that many people in society can connect with this vice character.

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Although Richard is involved with deception, plotting and murder even against his own family the audience does not feel hatred towards the Machiavellian villain an important feature of both texts that is necessary for the success of both texts. Looking for Richard also begins with a clear “quest” being to make Shakespeare relevant by showing the connection between characters and society. The language is highlighted as a barrier to this association.

Exploring the craft of performance On the notion of the craft of performance both texts explore an actor's ability to own their craft. Shakespeare presents the notion that all actions are constructed and therefore are based on deceit and lies, while Al Pacino sees actors as the owners of truth and are solely responsible for the understanding of Shakespeare and conveying his true intended purpose. Al Pacino presents a seemingly objective piece through his feigned 'lack of understanding of the play', however that is his way of ensuring audience members are positioned to automatically accept his view of not only the play but also Shakespeare.

Shakespeare as already mentioned in creating King Richard III as a propaganda piece needs to ensure the audience agrees upon his viewpoint. This is achieved through dramatic irony and the notion of deceit and constructed 'truths'. Al Pacino uses a theme song to ease the transition from recreation of the play to discussion or voxpopuli about King Richard III. Shakespeare instead focuses on soliloquies contrasted with interaction with other characters to show different stages of the play.

Theme of ambition Ambition is a central theme not only in the opening scenes but also throughout the development of both texts. In Shakespeare's King Richard III acceptance of this ambition is established through dramatic irony, with many of the darker murders and actions potentially seen as an Elizabethan audience as humorous or entertaining. Al Pacino instead is aware of the difference in values of a contemporary audience and the acceptance of diversity and minority groups. Looking for Richard creates a feeling of empathy for Richard, possible through a cultural shift.

Audiences do not find major fault in Richard's ambition as they see this as his way of reacting to factors beyond his control i. e. his deformity and unfavourable physical appearance. Omissions and highlighting certain parts Although the main plot and storyline of King Richard III is presented in Looking for Richard, Al Pacino has also omitted certain parts of the play and instead highlighted others. These decisions reflect his agenda and aim in creating his documentary. A strong emphasis is placed on Shakespeare's reasons for the play and considerations that he was forced to include.

Al Pacino removes the importance on the prophecy: " About a prophecy which says that ' G' Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be" Instead changing it ' C', so making it more accessible to the audience who may not be aware that Richard is the Duke of Gloucester and Clarence is actually George. The act of selecting characters (for Lady Anne) and deciding on locations for filming highlights again the constructed nature of the documentary but also explains that intended actors and presentation is importance.

The changing of the historical setting was necessary if Al Pacino did not wish the change any of the dialogue. The ability to maintain the original dialogue suggests that the play's ideas, concerns, themes and values are universal and timeless. Although the meaning of a text when it is transformed is inevitably altered, there are definite links between Shakespeare's King Richard III and Al Pacino's Looking for Richard. The contexts create for the texts to be presented through different mediums and these easily connect with the respective audience.

Both texts have a set purpose and audience. Characterisation of Richard and the exploration of the craft of performance are conveyed though differing methods with a strong emphasis on the composers control and input to a work. The notion of ambition is central to the opening scenes of both texts and audiences are empowered through dramatic irony and narration intrusion to establish a connection with the characters. Looking for Richard both enhances but alters the original text as it highlights aspects relevant to a contemporary audience, creating links between the two.