Richard III Essay, Research Paper

Was Richard III a monster or a victim of history?

Richard the III was a horrible tyrant who would stop at nothing to commit the most unthinkable acts to get what he wanted. He was a man that would kill his own family and children to obtain his one goal, which was to become the king. I know what I should be easy on the guy he couldn’t have been that bad of a guy. Well, you have to forgive me I was really unable to form an opinion of Richard. I saw Shakespeare’s adaptation of his life and I was convinced that he was this terrible man. Then I read The Daughter of Time by Josephine Tey. She had a much different perspective on Richard, she explained that in a lot of ways Richard was a good guy. She explains that the events that took place such as the deaths of many of his relatives were just coincidences. In this paper I will explain how we can never trust history and I will use the comparison of these two adaptations of Richard the III.

Was Richard the III a horrible man or just a victim of history? There are two sides to every story, on one hand he was a good king that was misunderstood for his methods of becoming a king. On the other he was a horrible tyrant who would do anything to get to the top. This is why we must be so careful about and can’t take history for granted. We have two stories of Richard; one Shakespeare’s adaptation of the story depicts him as a horrible bloodthirsty maniac. Next we have Josephine Tey’s The Daughter of Time which has a much different account of Richards life. For instances, Shakespeare’s rendition of Richard was one of a tyrant, an evil hunchback. He would step to any level to become king of England; he killed, lied and stole to reach his goal. On one occasion he killed his brother to seek the hand of his brother’s wife. He then went one step further, when she didn’t accept his loving hand in marriage he begged her to slay him with the very sword that cut through her beloved husbands chest. After some dramatics she reluctantly accepted his hand, because she didn’t want to kill him and she thought of this gesture as a testament of his love for her. Richard did a lot of other cruel things: along the way he killed his other brother’s children to move up the chain of inheritance to secure his right as king. Richard was most hated by his people for killing a boy in the tower; his people saw this as a vicious act of a crazy murdering madman. In contrast, Tey’s account of Richard was very different. Richard was described as a victim, turned in to a heathen by the throne. Furthermore, Richard only committed murder only when his personal life had been disrupted. He would kill only in fits of rage, for instance if his wife cheated on him he would kill her for unfaithfulness, or perhaps kill her partner whose action with his wife, had in some way ruined their relationship or the future of his children. Whatever murder he committed would be the result of acute emotion, it wasn’t planned. So one could say that he didn’t poses the ability to kill the boy in the tower. It would have been a silly murder that Richard had nothing to gain from, therefore Richard was incapable of this murder. I am convinced that Tey’s account of Richard’s personality is the correct one, because his ideas and theories are well thought out and logical, and he has evidence to back them up. First of all, up until his the moment of his brother’s death he seems to have been admirable and devoted to his brother. Second, Richard was known as a very good administrator. He governed the North of England as well as it could be governed . And finally Richard wasn’t a hunchback that was a myth, So was the “so called” withered arm. It seems as though, he had no visible deformity, or ones that mattered. So, I feel that because there was no real historian documenting Richards’s personal life, accept for untrue myths and stories. One could disprove many of the horrible stories about Richard. After the dishonest stories are disproved all that remains is the truth. Richard appears to be an up standing citizen and loyal to his family, and though he occasionally had fits of rage ending in blood. He was not a plotting evil man.

Before I read Daughter of Time I had no idea how careful we had to be when choosing what is fact or fiction. It is very scary especially considering that there really was not a whole lot of media back in that day. Now a days we have so many forms of media that any major event could be misconstrued. Often times in the past I would read or see something that appears to be a factual piece of information and accepted it as the truth. Now I will forever wonder what the truth is, and I will be more skeptical about knowledge from potentially unreliable sources and from biased standpoints. Richard was clearly not a crazed lunatic, but merely a trapped heir that got caught up the pressure to sit on the throne of England. But most importantly, we can now clearly see that history is not set in stone and that it is our job as historians to find the truth and not accept history unless its from a credible source with witness or other credible resources.