

Smoking Shakespeare

Teachers' Instructions

Activity 3.1 / Shakespeare Learning Commons

Canadian Adaptations of
SHAKESPEARE

www.canadianshakespeares.ca

1. Introduction

Tobacco advertising was banned in Canada in 1988 when Parliament passed the *Tobacco Products Control Act*. Thus, today's teenagers have never witnessed tobacco ads on television, in magazines, or as part of sponsorship for sporting events or the arts. Because the tobacco industry's growth depends on enticing new smokers, many tobacco advertisements target teenagers. By examining a series of print advertisements from Canada's Stratford Festival, this module asks students to explore how tobacco companies use the arts and William Shakespeare to market their products. This is particularly important for high school students who are likely being directly exposed to cigarettes and Shakespeare for the first time. Recent anti-tobacco legislation in Ontario and throughout the world has brought tobacco issues back to the forefront of health awareness. Ontario students are likely aware of *The Smoke Free Ontario Act*, which replaced the *Tobacco Control Act* and prohibited smoking in all enclosed public places and workplaces as of May 31, 2006. Similar legislation has been passed across Canada as well as in other nations.

2. Purpose:

To examine and analyze a series of cigarette and cigar print advertisements to discover how tobacco companies use Shakespeare to market their products.

Payoff:

Students will develop critical reading skills across a range of media.

Primary Materials:

- Student worksheet

http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/pdf/activity3_1_worksheet.pdf

- Sample activity for Shakespeare's Cigars

http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/pdf/activity3_1_shakespeare_cigars.pdf

- Extension activity worksheet

http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/pdf/activity3_1_worksheet_2.pdf

- Collection of seven advertisements

http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/pdf/activity3_1_advertisements.pdf

3. Activity: Preface

In examining a series of print advertisements for cigars and cigarettes, students will begin to understand how tobacco companies manipulate potential consumers into buying products. These advertisements are an example of how the cultural capital of Shakespeare is used to legitimate and elevate smoking to a higher level of sophistication and social acceptability. In his 2000 study "Targeting youth and concerned smokers: evidence from Canadian tobacco industry documents" Richard Pollay suggests that 90% of regular smokers begin before the age of 19. Pollay's study suggests that Canadian tobacco companies, including Imperial Tobacco Ltd. and RJR-Macdonald Inc. have focused many of their advertisements at young starters—a move that leads to long-term success for the company. Both Imperial Tobacco Ltd. and RJR-Macdonald were long-time financial supporters of Canada's Stratford Festival—their ads appeared in Festival programs from 1959 until the advertising ban in 1988. Macdonald and Imperial were also first listed as "Founder Members" of the Festival from 1954 and 1956 respectively. High school students from Southwestern Ontario have frequented the Stratford Festival in class-groups for decades. While being exposed to the work of William Shakespeare, these students were simultaneously being exposed to tobacco advertisements.

Smoking Shakespeare

Teachers' Instructions

Activity 3.1 / Shakespeare Learning Commons

4. Activity: Before

- 1) Begin by conducting a class discussion about tobacco and smoking. What does the class associate with tobacco? What words come to mind when one thinks of tobacco, smoking, cigarettes, and cigars? Make a list of associations on the blackboard or on an overhead.
- 2) Ask the class what they associate with Shakespeare. What words or images come to mind when they think of the famous playwright? Record these thoughts on the blackboard, or on an overhead.
- 3) Before working on the sample activity, ask the class if they can think of any possible connections between Shakespeare and smoking.
- 4) Please consult the sample activity for Shakespeare's Cigar. Re-produce the sample advertisement on a handout or overhead. Allow the students several moments to examine the image and then begin to analyze the advertisement using the discussion questions.
- 5) Once the class has completed this discussion, proceed with the group activity.

Activity: During

- 1) Divide students into groups of 4 or 5.
- 2) Present each group with the student worksheet, and one advertisement.
- 3) Allow students approximately 15-20 minutes to examine the ad and respond to the questions on the worksheet.

5. After

- Each group will present their findings to the class. As each group discusses their ad, the teacher should put a copy of the ad on an overhead projector/ document projector, so that the entire class can study the example.

6. Extension Activity

- 1) Over the next week ask students to go home and watch two different television shows, paying particular attention to the commercials shown during the programs. Ask students to individually fill out the take-home worksheet.
- 2) Have students share their findings with the class.