

TSSMTM

Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“A Man for all Seasons”

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AREA 1:

READING & RESPONDING:

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Chapter 1

GENRE

A Man For All Seasons is a play. It is to be presented on a stage to a live audience who view it. This play is a fictionalized history, as it is the playwright's view of a series of incidents in English history. Being about historical people, it is also a biography – albeit a highly qualified one. Whilst it is about the lives of historical people, it is only a personal view by the playwright himself. This play covers only certain events in history, in particular, the events surrounding the divorce of King Henry VIII from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and his subsequent remarriage to his second wife, Anne Boleyn. These events are generally regarded as being among some of the more important and interesting in English history.

Genre:

Historical drama

The play is about some of the events in English history, concerning the divorce and remarriage of King Henry VIII.

Satire

Given the play's critical tone and style regarding its themes of political and social power and ambition, it may also be regarded as a satire.

Satire is a technique, often witty, whose primary purpose is to criticize a person[s], idea[s], attitude[s], institution[s] or social practice[s] through ridicule. Satire may involve the ironic assertion of values that are the opposite of what it actually wishes to promote. There seems to be no direct criticism of the King, Cromwell or Rich in the play; however, a close reading of the dialogue reveals satirical elements about the gaining and exercise of social and political power.

1.1 Title

The text's title can often be revealing. It may give direct and/or indirect indications of genre, and also of aspects of plot, characters and/or themes. The title suggest that this is about a particular person 'A Man' and that he is particularly suited to all times and events 'For All Seasons.' Whilst the play is about some important events in English history, including the creation of an English church independent of the Roman Catholic Church, it is also largely about the man who was opposed to the King's actions, Thomas More, rather than the King himself.

Title:

The title is a reference to Sir Thomas More, being a multi-faceted man, a good addition to any society at any time.

1.2 Audience

A writer will have a target audience in mind when he writes. These are the people whom he is writing for. Genre can often be useful to help determine who the audience may be.

Audience:

The theatre-going audience – those interested in works which have a social or political message for contemporary times.

1.3 Purpose

A writer will write a play for a particular reason. Often, the purpose can be recognized, especially in relation to the major themes, as the writer may wish to address a particular issue. The play is about political and social power.

Purpose:

To explore notions of principles and power.