

Webster: The Tragedies

ANALYSING TEXTS

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For Elizabeth

Contents

<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	viii
<i>A Note on Editions</i>	ix
Introduction	1
Part 1: Analysing Webster's Tragedies	
1 Openings	7
2 Endings	31
3 Turning Points	54
4 Tragic Heroines	83
5 Heroes and Villains	110
6 Society and Politics	137
7 Webster's Theatricality	161
8 Iconography and Imagery	184
<i>General Conclusions to Part 1</i>	204
Part 2: The Context and the Critics	
9 Webster's Plays	209
10 Contexts	222
11 Sample Critical Views	240
<i>Further Reading</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	262

General Editor's Preface

This series is dedicated to one clear belief: that we can all enjoy, understand and analyse literature for ourselves, provided we know how to do it. How can we build on close understanding of a short passage, and develop our insight into the whole work? What features do we expect to find in a text? Why do we study style in so much detail? In demystifying the study of literature, these are only some of the questions the *Analysing Texts* series addresses and answers.

The books in this series will not do all the work for you, but will provide you with the tools, and show you how to use them. Here, you will find samples of close, detailed analysis, with an explanation of the analytical techniques utilised. At the end of each chapter there are useful suggestions for further work you can do to practise, develop and hone the skills demonstrated and build confidence in your own analytical ability.

An author's individuality shows in the way they write: every work they produce bears the hallmark of that writer's personal 'style'. In the main part of each book we concentrate therefore on analysing the particular flavour and concerns of one author's work, and explain the features of their writing in connection with major themes. In Part 2 there are chapters about the author's life and work, assessing their contribution to developments in literature; and a sample of critics' views are summarised and discussed in comparison with each other. Some suggestions for further reading provide a bridge towards further critical research.

Analysing Texts is designed to stimulate and encourage your critical and analytic faculty, to develop your personal insight into the author's work and individual style, and to provide you with the skills and techniques to enjoy at first hand the excitement of discovering the richness of the text.

NICHOLAS MARSH

A Note on Editions

References to act, scene and line numbers in both of Webster's tragedies in this book are to the Revels Student Editions, published by Manchester University Press, and both edited by John Russell Brown. *The White Devil* was published in 1996, and *The Duchess of Malfi* in 1997. Square brackets are used to indicate editorial stage directions.