

In his *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, King James I of England (he was also James VI of Scotland) included several arguments and criticisms against the use of tobacco. It is interesting to compare and contrast his arguments in the following excerpts with current anti-smoking messaging in the Government of Canada's [Smoking and tobacco](#) webpage and Health Canada's [Health labels for cigarettes and little cigars](#).

King James raises concerns about the source

And now good country men let us (I pray you) consider, what honour or policy can move us to imitate the barbarous and beastly manners of the wild, godless, and slavish Indians, especially in so vile and stinking a custom? ... Why do we not as well imitate them in walking naked as they do? in preferring glasses, feathers, and such toys, to gold and precious stones, as they do? yea why do we not deny God and adore the devil, as they do?

King James drew attention to the social influences on human behaviour

And so from hand to hand it spreads, till it be practised by all, not for any commodity that is in it, but only because it is come to be the fashion. For such is the force of that natural self-love in every one of us, and such is the corruption of envy bred in the breast of every one, as we cannot be content unless we imitate everything that our fellows doe, and so prove ourselves capable of everything whereof they are capable, like Apes, counterfeiting the manners of others, to our own destruction.

King James recognized that cultural norms influence behaviour (peer pressure)

... it is become ... a point of good fellowship, and he that will refuse to take a pipe of tobacco among his fellows, ... is accounted peevish and no good company, even as they do with tipping in the cold eastern countries.

King James notes the addictive qualities of tobacco

And from this weakness it proceeds, that many in this kingdom have had such a continual use of taking this unsavory smoke, as now they are not able to forbear the same, no more than an old drunkard can abide to be long sober, without falling into an incurable weakness and evil constitution ... To take a custom in anything that cannot be left again, is most harmful to the people of any land.

King James noted the financial impact smoking could have

... let the gentry of this land bear witness, some of them bestowing three, some four hundred pounds a year upon this precious stink, which I am sure might be bestowed upon many far better uses.

Because tobacco was being promoted as a medicine, King James seeks to refute these medical claims

But first these cures ought not to be used, but where there is need of them, the contrary whereof, is daily practised in this general use of tobacco by all sorts and complexions of people. ... And what greater absurdity can there be, then to say that one cure shall serve for divers, nay, contrarious sorts of diseases? It is all undoubted ground among all Physicians, that there is almost no sort either of nourishment or medicine, that hath not something in it disagreeable to some part of man's body, because, as I have already said, the nature of the temperature of every part, is so different from another, that according to the old proverb, That which is good for the head, is evil for the neck and the shoulders. ... Medicine hath that virtue, that it never leaves a man in that state wherein it finds him: it makes a sick man whole, but a whole man sick. And as medicine helps nature being taken at times of necessity, so being ever and continually used, it doth but weaken, weary, and wear nature.

But ultimately, King James argues that tobacco is not a medicine but a cause of disease

So this stinking smoke being sucked up by the nose, and imprisoned in the cold and moist brains, is by their cold and wet faculty, turned and cast forth again in watery distillations, and so are you made free and purged of nothing, but that wherewith you wilfully burdened your selves ... Surely smoke becomes a kitchen far better than a dining chamber, and yet it makes a kitchen also oftentimes in the inward parts of men, soiling and infecting them, with an unctuous and oily kind of soot, as has been found in some great tobacco takers, that after their death were opened.