



Oregon
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2017 Study Guide

THE PRODIGAL SON?



King Henry V
National Portrait Gallery, London

Is there any historical basis for the depiction of Prince Hal as a rebellious teenager? It depends on which part of the rebellion you are talking about. First of all, the notion of a teenager didn't really exist in medieval England. You were a child, and then you were an adult. Prince Henry was 12 when his father took the throne in 1399, and by the age of 16 he was leading a division of his father's army in the Battle of Shrewsbury. There is no evidence of a rift between father and son at this age, although a history of Henry V written in the decades after his death says that he "ferverently followed the service of Venus as well as of Mars, as a young man he burned with her torches, and other insolencies accompanied the years of his untamed youth." This would seem to indicate that he was known for his hot-blooded love life as well as his prowess in battle.

There is a historical reality behind Shakespeare's depiction of the later political struggle between father and son, dramatized in *Henry IV, Part Two* by Hal literally putting the crown on his own head when he thinks his father has died. As heir to the throne, Prince Henry was a trusted member of his father's council of advisors. From 1410–11, Hal and other council members actually ran the country during King Henry's serious illness. Perhaps believing that his father would never recover, Prince Henry instituted policies that were at odds with the King's, and when Henry IV recovered, he not only reversed those decisions but also temporarily dismissed his son from his council.

Henry IV, Part Two by William Shakespeare



King Henry IV
National Portrait Gallery, London

KING HENRY IV

- Born at Bolingbroke Castle in April 1367.
- His father, John of Gaunt, married into the Lancaster fortune, making him one of the wealthiest men in England, wealth which Henry should have inherited when John of Gaunt died. However, Henry's cousin, King Richard II, banished him from England and confiscated his entire inheritance.
- Henry responded by gathering an army of nobles loyal to him and usurped the throne, forcing King Richard to abdicate. Henry was crowned King on October 13, 1399.
- Henry died on March 20, 1413. He is buried behind the high altar of Canterbury Cathedral.



William Shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE

- Born around April 23, 1564.
- Married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. They had three children between 1583 and 1585.
- Became an actor and playwright for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which became the King's Men when King James I was crowned in 1603. Wrote 37 plays, 2 epic poems and 154 sonnets over a 25-year career.
- *Henry IV, Part Two* was written circa 1598.
- Died in his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1616.
- Buried in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church.

Before seeing/reading the play

1. Research the political events in England around the time Shakespeare wrote *Henry IV, Part Two* (ca.1598). Pay special attention to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, legitimate succession to the throne and rebellion. These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.tudorhistory.org/elizabeth/queen.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Devereux,_2nd_Earl_of_Essex

2. Research the background and history of English succession from Edward III to Henry IV. How did King Henry IV obtain his rule? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.historymedren.about.com/od/hwho/p/who_henry4.htm

<http://www.britroyals.com/plantagenet.htm>

3. Define rumor. What is rumor's relationship to fact? To supposition? Identify instances in recent history of a rumor that was proved false. A rumor that was proved true. In each instance, who benefited and who suffered from the circulation of the rumor? Why would people choose to circulate unsubstantiated rumors?

4. Research the Lord of Misrule, the Saturnalia Festival and the Feast of Fools. What was the Lord of Misrule responsible for during festivals and celebrations? What function did he serve? What happened to him at the end of the festivities? These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.ancient.eu/Saturnalia/>

<http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/yuletraditions/fl/The-Lord-of-Misrule.htm>



The Roman Saturnalia by J.R. Weguelin, 1884

5. What is the definition of Honor? Define honor in terms that have meaning for you. How highly do you value honor? Who are some people you perceive as being honorable, and why?

6. What qualities should a good king possess? Who were some good kings from history and literature? Which of their attributes made them good? How were these kings rewarded or punished for being good? What qualities does a bad ruler possess? What are the consequences of bad kingship for the king? For the people he rules?

7. Research the monarchic system of government. What conditions are needed for a king to rule effectively? How much power did an English monarch possess in Shakespeare's time? During the early 1400s? Who other than the king holds power in a monarchy? How is a monarchy similar to a democratic system of government? How is it different? These and other websites provide information:

www.elizabethi.org/contents/power/monarch.html

www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/politics/difference-between-monarchy-and-democracy/

**“Uneasy lies the head
that wears a crown.”**

-King Henry, Act 3, Scene 1

8. Research the “divine right of kings.” How did this right relate to the monarchic system of government? What is the relationship between a king and God? In light of this principle, how is rebellion against a king regarded? This and other websites provide information:

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Divine_right_of_kings

9. Why are civil wars potentially more devastating than wars between nations? What is generally the cause of civil war? How do civil wars relate to power and rebellion?

10. Research life in medieval England. What was life like for the nobles? The clergy? The peasants? What is feudalism? How did the feudal system work in medieval England? What was the feudal hierarchy and what were the obligations of each class to the others. These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.medieval-life-and-times.info/medieval-life/index.htm>

<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/>

11. Research the Hundred Years' War between England and France during the years 1337-1453. What was the cause of the conflict? What right did England have to lands in France? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Years'_War

<http://www.theotherside.co.uk/tm-heritage/background/100yearswar.htm>

<http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/hundred-years-war.htm>

RESOURCES

Plays:

Richard II and *Henry IV, Part One*, William Shakespeare

The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland,

Raphael Holinshed

Shakespeare's English Kings, Peter Saccio

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and times at the following websites:

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/>

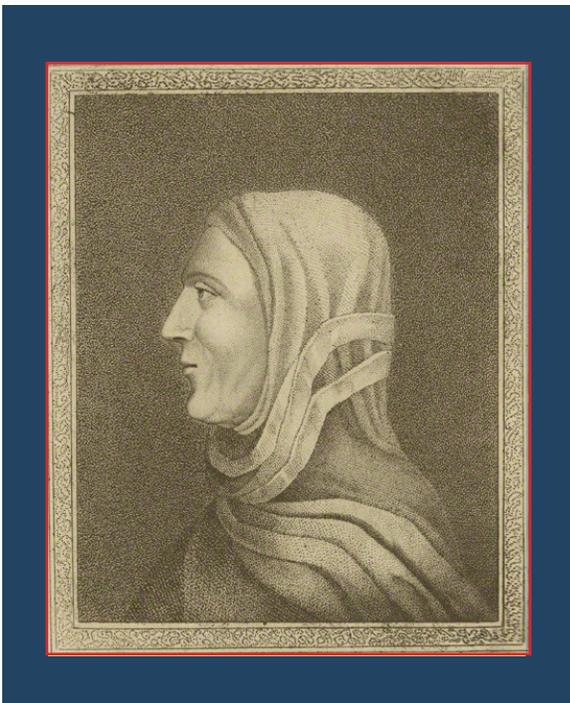
<http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=865&C-FID=6230886&CFTOKEN=25420173>

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare.html>

<http://www.bardweb.net/man.html>

After seeing/reading the play

1. Refer to your research on English succession from Edward III to Henry IV. What happened before *Henry IV, Part Two* begins? What past occurrences haunt King Henry IV and other characters?
2. What tone does Rumor set at the beginning of the play? Who in the play is affected by rumors and gossip, and how? Which rumors are true? Which are false?
3. Refer to your research about the lives of Henry IV and Henry V. How has Shakespeare altered the historical facts, personalities and timelines in *Henry IV, Part Two*? What might be his reasons for these alterations? What is gained?
4. In Act I, scene iii, the Archbishop of York says, "O thoughts of men accursed! Past and to come seems best; things present worst." What does he mean by this statement? In what way is this statement true in the play?
5. What is the attitude towards war in the play? Find pro-war passages in the text. What are the benefits of war in the world of the play? What are the drawbacks? What strategies of war are suggested and by whom? What reasons for not going to war are given and by whom? Whose attitudes prevail and why?
6. Several relationships between Hal and his father and father-figures are explored in the play. Compare Hal's relationship with his father, King Henry IV, and his two father figures, Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice. Describe Hal's relationship with each. What does each believe about Hal? What specific lessons does each attempt to instill in him through words? What does each teach him by example? How are these teachings reflected in the King that Hal becomes by the play's end?



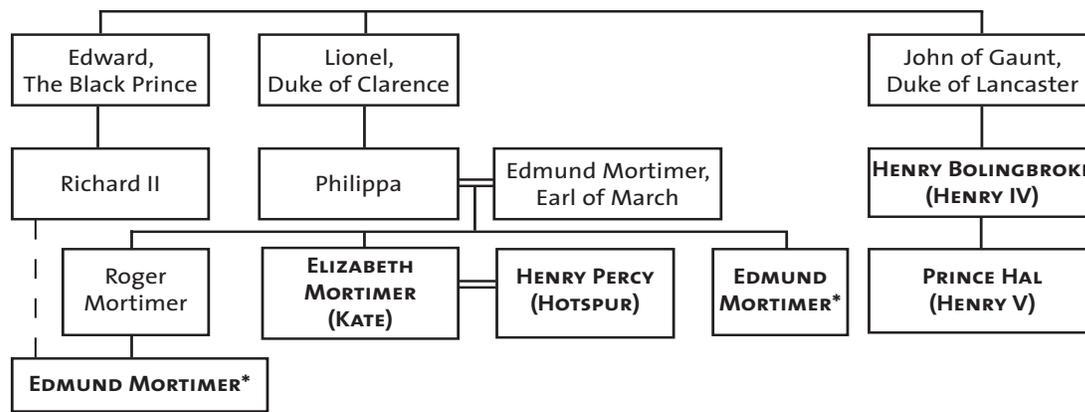
Lord Chief Justice



2017 *Henry IV, Part Two* set rendering. Designed by Adam Rigg.

7. If you have read or seen *Henry IV, Part One*, describe the changes in Hal from that play to this one. How do you account for the differences in Prince Hal? In what ways has he stayed the same?
8. Refer to your research on the feudal system. Identify the various social arrangements in the play (e.g., family, court). In each of these arrangements, who is the "leader"? How are the other members ranked in relation to them? What are the shared core values of each group?
9. Shakespeare uses a parallel structure in this play, alternating serious scenes with nobles and comic scenes with commoners. Compare the nobles with the commoners. How do these groups reflect each other? How does each of these groups respond to rumors? What does honor mean to each group? Loyalty? Rebellion? War? Passage of time?
10. What is the cause of King Henry IV's insomnia? What has he realized about power? Why doesn't he reveal his insight to Prince Hal? What advice does he give Prince Hal regarding kingship?
11. Human mortality is a theme in *Henry IV, Part Two*. How does Falstaff's attitude towards death compare with King Henry IV's attitude and why?
12. Refer to your research on England in the late 1500s. Citizens in England were nostalgic over Queen Elizabeth's reign, a time of relative peace, and anxious over who would succeed the popular Queen after her death. What are some examples in *Henry IV, Part Two* of concern with the passage of time. What is the general attitude toward the past in this play? The present? The future?
13. Describe Prince John's relationship with the rebels and his treatment of them. At what point, if any, does he fall into dishonorable behavior? What conditions justify his actions?
14. Refer to your research on divine right and monarchy. What was the ideal process for a man to become king in Medieval England? What steps did Henry IV take? Compare his method to the ideal method. What repercussions result from his taking the crown? How does Prince Hal become Henry V? Refer to your research on primogeniture. How does Hal's claim to the throne differ from that of his father?

HENRY IV'S FAMILY TREE



* Shakespeare conflated the two Edmund Mortimers. The son of Roger Mortimer was the Edmund named Richard II's heir, while the brother-in-law of Henry Percy was the Edmund who married Owen Glendower's daughter.

The Strange Tale of the Boar's Head Tavern

Look at the stage directions of the *Henry IV* plays, or talk to anyone connected to the theatre and you will find the Eastcheap tavern in the plays referred to as the Boar's Head. Shakespeare, however, never used that name. In fact, the tavern is never given any name at all in the text. The name does not appear in print in connection with Shakespeare's plays until an edition in 1733 by a famous English Shakespeare editor named Lewis Theobald. Apparently he was following an oral tradition already popular, but when exactly that tradition started is a mystery. There is no record of a Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap during the time period of the plays, although there was one there in Shakespeare's day. Did Shakespeare and the other members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men hang out at the Boar's Head during the time they first produced the *Henry IV* plays? Does the oral tradition of calling Hal and Falstaff's hangout the Boar's Head go all the way back to Shakespeare? Or did the association occur at a later date for reasons now lost to time? In all probability, we will never know.



2017 Boar's Head Tavern rendering. Designed by Adam Rigg.

15. Refer to your research on Saturnalia and the Lord of Misrule. To what extent is Hal's rejection of Falstaff inevitable? By rejecting Falstaff, what parts of himself is Hal rejecting? By honoring the Lord Chief Justice, what parts of himself is he honoring?
16. If you are seeing/reading *Julius Caesar*, compare the civil wars in these plays. What does each group hope to gain by rebelling? What different approaches to civil war and battle strategies does each employ? Who speaks against going to war and why? What effect does civil war have on the country?
17. If you are seeing *Julius Caesar*, compare and contrast the betrayal of Mowbray by Prince John with the betrayal of Caesar by Brutus. What were the reasons for the betrayals? In what ways is the betrayal of Mowbray justified? In what ways is the betrayal of Caesar justified? In what ways are Prince John's and Brutus' intentions different? What do their intentions and actions say about them as leaders?
18. If you are seeing *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* and/or *Julius Caesar*, compare and contrast the legacies that are being passed to the younger generation in each play. What lessons do Prince Hal, Octavius and Acan learn from their elders? In what way is violence a part of the legacies in each play? How do Falstaff, Caesar and Jason contribute to their own downfalls? What alternative actions could have been taken in each case?

Prince Hal, Falstaff and Poins
 Michael John Goodman, The
 Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare
 Archive (8 June 2017).



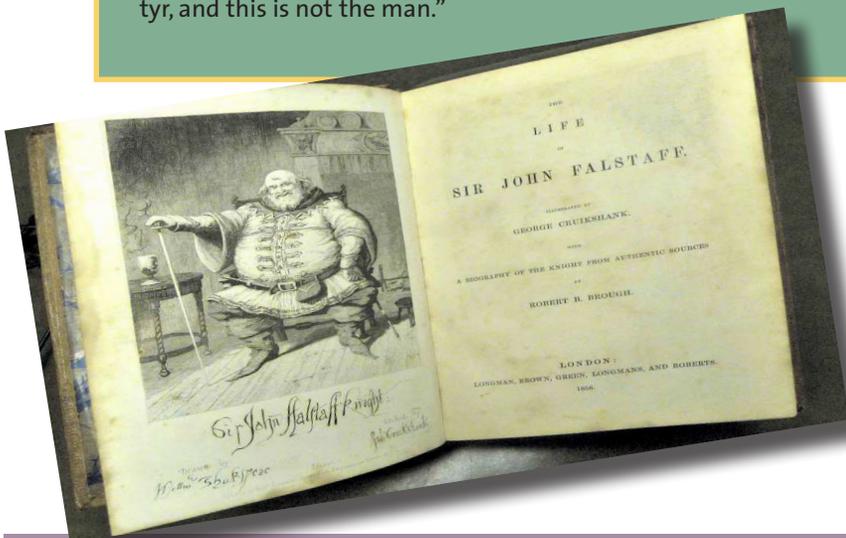
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As a fully fleshed-out character, Sir John Falstaff is a wholly original creation of Shakespeare's, not corresponding to any real person from history or from earlier fiction. One of Shakespeare's sources is an anonymous play from the 1580s called *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. It contains a minor character named Sir John Oldcastle, from which Shakespeare developed Falstaff. Shakespeare also originally gave his character the name Oldcastle. So why was it changed to Falstaff? Well, it turns out that Sir John Oldcastle was a

real person, and a friend of Prince Henry's. But far from being a lecherous drinking buddy, Oldcastle was a deeply religious man who belonged to a sect called the Lollards, a group that criticized the worldliness and grandeur of the established church. Oldcastle eventually concocted a plot to kidnap young King Henry V and establish a commonwealth government in place of the monarchy. He was captured and executed in 1417. So, almost 200 years later in 1597, who cared that the name of this religious martyr had been given to a drunken lecher in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV*? His descendant Lord Cobham, that's who. Henry Carey, England's Lord Chamberlain and the royal patron of the company Shakespeare belonged to, had just died, and the office was briefly held by Lord Cobham. All new plays in London had to be read and approved by the Lord Chamberlain's office before they could be performed. Either personally through his office, or by complaining directly to the Queen, it appears that Lord Cobham succeeded in forcing the company to change the character's name. Shakespeare addresses the issue in the epilogue to *Henry IV, Part Two*. "One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloy'd with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it . . . where (for anything I know) Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be kill'd with your hard opinions; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man."



Falstaff mit Kanne (Falstaff with tankard)
 Oil painting by Eduard von Grützner.



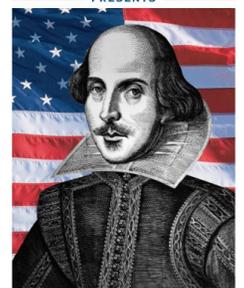
Left, *The Life of Sir John Falstaff* (1858) by Robert B. Brough, with illustrations by George Cruikshank. Duke University Library.

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