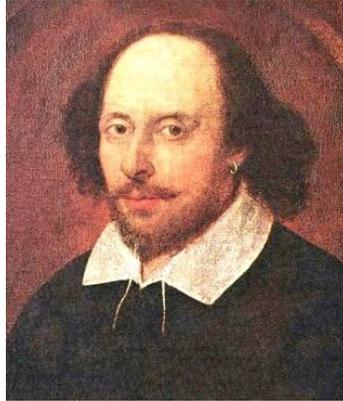


HENRY IV, part 2

by William Shakespeare



THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the family of a prosperous tradesman in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. While in his mid-teens, he was forced to leave school because his family fell into a period of poverty, so that he had only a rudimentary education. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior and already three months pregnant. The marriage produced three children in three years, but in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London to seek his fortune in the big city.

In London, he embarked upon a career on the stage, becoming a popular actor by the early fifteen nineties. In 1591, he penned his first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*. His early plays were comedies, and show nothing of the depth that characterized his later works. His plots were borrowed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary. During his career, he wrote 37 plays, three narrative poems, and 154 sonnets.

His writing brought him fame and popularity, but he continued to act as well as write (critics love to speculate about which of the characters in his plays would have been played by the author). He eventually became a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men when James I ascended the throne). Most of his plays were performed at local theaters like the Rose, the Globe, and the indoor Blackfriars. When the Globe burned to the ground in 1613 (a cannon misfired during a performance of *Henry VIII*), Shakespeare retired, and died in Stratford three years later on his fifty-second birthday.

Henry IV, part 2, written in 1598, is the third part of a tetralogy of plays dealing with the rise of the house of Lancaster (*Richard II, Henry IV, part 1, Henry IV, part 2*, and *Henry V*) and centering on the career of King Henry V (Prince Hal in the two *Henry IV* plays), and continues the coming-of-age story about the growth of a carousing, self-centered prince into a young man with the potential to rule wisely and lead his people. The incidents described in the play took place during 1403-13, during the time of the Wars of the Roses, and end with the death of Henry IV and the coronation of Henry V after the wayward son is reconciled with his father. As was true with many of Shakespeare's history plays, his principal source of information was Raphael Holinshed's *The*

Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland. As in all his history plays, Shakespeare makes alterations in the facts (the play gives no hint that ten years passes from curtain to curtain) and adds fictitious characters (the comic figures, especially Falstaff, fit into this category, though Shakespeare originally called his great comic creation Sir John Oldcastle - the actual name of a Lollard leader martyred under Henry V - but later changed the name when Oldcastle's family protested). More than any other part of the tetralogy, *Henry IV, part 2* centers on the character of Falstaff. He and his companions not only provide comic relief, but also serve as a measuring stick against which the growth of Prince Hal may be assessed. By the end of the play, Henry IV dies, Prince Hal is anointed King Henry V, and he demonstrates his maturity by distancing himself once and for all from the disreputable cronies of his past life, setting the stage for the heroic exploits of *Henry V*.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Henry IV - The king of England who, to his dying day, fought against rebels among his own nobles. At the end of the play he is finally reconciled with his son, Prince Hal.
- Prince Hal (later Henry V) - His part in this play is much smaller than in the previous one, but at the end he is reconciled with his father and shows his intention to rule wisely by honoring those who deserve his favor and cutting off the disreputable friends from his youth.
- John of Lancaster - Hal's younger brother, who handles the negotiations with the rebels at Gaultree Forest.
- Earl of Northumberland - Hotspur's father, one of the rebel leaders who, as in the previous play, sits out the crucial conflict, hiding with the troops in Scotland.
- Lady Percy - Hotspur's widow, who tries to encourage Northumberland to avoid fighting in the rebellion.
- Richard Scroop, Archbishop of York - Chief rebel leader, he negotiates the peace with Lancaster, and is ultimately arrested and executed along with the other rebellious nobles.
- Lords Mowbray, Hastings, Bardolph, and Morton - Rebel lords who take up arms against the king.
- Earls of Warwick and Westmoreland - Nobles loyal to the king.
- Lord Chief Justice - Having enforced the law on Hal, Falstaff, and their cronies in years past, he expects to be treated poorly when Hal becomes king. Instead, he is elevated to the post of royal counselor.
- Sir John Falstaff - An old, fat reprobate, he expects great things when Hal becomes king, but is rejected and banished instead.
- Shallow and Silence - Two provincial justices of the peace in Gloucestershire, they went to Oxford with Falstaff, and provide comic relief.

- Bardolph, Pistol, Page - Falstaff's companions.
- Mistress Quickly - A tavern owner to whom Falstaff owes money, and who wants him to marry her.
- Doll Tearsheet - A prostitute who is one of Falstaff's regular companions.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Past and to come seems best, things present worst.” (Archbishop, Iiii, 108)

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” (Henry IV, IIIi, 31)

“Pardon me, sir. I have heard the word. Phrase call you it? By this good day, I know not the phrase, but I will maintain the word with my sword to be a soldierlike word, and a word of exceeding good command, by heaven. Accommodated, that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated; or when a man is, being, whereby ‘a man may be thought to be accommodated, which is an excellent thing.’” (Bardolph, IIIii, 70-77)

“The tide of blood in me
Hath proudly flowed in vanity till now.
Now it doth turn and ebb back to the sea,
Where it shall mingle with the state of floods
And flow henceforth in formal majesty.” (Henry V, Vii, 129-133)

“I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane,
But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.
Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace.
Leave gormandizing. Know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men.
Reply not to me with a fool-born jest.
Presume not that I am the thing I was,
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
That I have turned away my former self.
So will I those that kept me company.
When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,
The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
Till then, I banish thee, on pain of death,
As I have done the rest of my misleaders,
Not to come near our person by ten mile.” (Henry V, Vv, 48-66)

NOTES

Act I, scene 1 - The play begins with an introductory speech by Rumor, who tells the audience that, after Prince Hal's victory over Hotspur at Shrewsbury, narrated at the end of *Henry IV, part 1*, word spread among the people that Hotspur had killed Hal, and that the king had submitted to the rebels, led by Douglas. Such a rumor found its way to Northumberland, Hotspur's father, borne by Lord Bardolph, but soon contradicted by Morton and other messengers, who spoke the truth - that Hotspur had been killed by Hal and the rebels routed. Northumberland is ready to give up at this point, but Morton encourages him, telling him of the activity of Richard Scroop, Archbishop of York, who is now supporting the rebellion.

Act I, scene 2 - The scene moves to London, where we meet Falstaff and his cronies. After some banter between Falstaff and his Page, then Falstaff and the servant of the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice himself tells Falstaff that he will no longer pursue him for the Gad's Hill incident (*Henry IV, part 1*) because of his alleged heroism at Shrewsbury, but that he had better behave himself in the future. Falstaff has been called to fight with the king's forces under John of Lancaster, Hal's brother. But Falstaff, as usual, has plans to keep himself as far away from danger as possible.

Act I, scene 3 - The scene shifts now to the palace of the Archbishop of York, Richard Scroop. The rebels debate whether or not they can, with their 25,000 men, defeat the king and his forces. They are confident that they can do so if Northumberland arrives with his troops in time, but are uncertain otherwise. Hastings reminds the others that the king's forces are divided into three groups, directed against the French, Owen Glendower and the Welsh, and against themselves; they thus conclude that they have the ability to win.

Act II, scene 1 - Outside an Eastcheap tavern, police sergeants have arrived to arrest Falstaff; Mistress Quickly, the tavern hostess, claims that he owes her a hundred marks. When Falstaff arrives, he and Bardolph fight the officers until the Chief Justice arrives to break up the brawl. Mistress Quickly says that, not only does Falstaff owe her money, but that he also promised to marry her. Falstaff, of course, denies everything, and demands to be released because he is on the king's business. Mistress Quickly reluctantly accepts his promise of payment later, then Gower arrives with the news that the king and Prince Hal are in the area with their troops, on the way to meet Northumberland and Scroop.

Act II, scene 2 - The scene now moves to the London house of the Prince of Wales. Hal is tired and his father is ill, but he cannot grieve because, given his past reputation as a profligate, people would think him a hypocrite. Hal receives a message from Falstaff, and he and Poins decide to disguise themselves as waiters and surprise Falstaff at dinner at the tavern.

Act II, scene 3 - Meanwhile, at Northumberland's castle, his wife and daughter-in-law (Hotspur's widow) try to talk him out of joining the rebellion. Lady Percy reminds him that he failed to bring troops to support her husband, thus leaving him to his death; why should he then support others who are better-equipped than Hotspur had been? The women advise him to flee to Scotland, then throw his support behind the rebels if they have some success against the king. He finally agrees to do so.

Act II, scene 4 - Back at the tavern, Falstaff is preparing to dine, and begins to banter with Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet. When his ensign Pistol arrives, he is drunk, and begins to insult Doll, after which Falstaff drives him out. Hal and Poins then arrive in disguise; Doll begins to ask Falstaff about Hal and Poins, and he, not realizing they are present, roundly insults both of them. When they reveal themselves, Falstaff blusters a bit, insisting that he insulted them among the wicked so the wicked would not be drawn to them. Peto then arrives and announces that Hal, Falstaff, and the others are needed to join the forces of the king immediately.

Act III, scene 1 - At the king's palace in Westminster, King Henry bemoans his inability to sleep. He then reminisces about the time a decade ago when he, King Richard II, and Northumberland had all been friends; then he and Northumberland rebelled against Richard, and now Northumberland was rebelling against him. He just wants it all to be over, and vows to undertake a crusade to the Holy Land should he win the victory.

Act III, scene 2 - Outside the home of Justice Shallow in Gloucestershire, Shallow and Silence are reminiscing about their university days and recalling Falstaff, who soon arrives searching for recruits for the war. After interviewing and conscripting the recruits, Falstaff and the two justices go off to dinner. While they are gone, two of the recruits bribe their way out of fighting.

Act IV, scene 1 - The rebels have gathered in Gaultree Forest. Scroop has just received word that Northumberland is waiting in Scotland to see the results of the conflict. Meanwhile, the king's forces are a mile away, 30,000 in number. Westmoreland arrives, representing the king, and asks why Scroop is perpetuating the rebellion. The Archbishop argues that the rebels took up arms only because their grievances were not addressed by the king, so that the present suffering is worse than what they stand to suffer in battle. Westmoreland then says that the king is willing to hear their grievances, and grant whatever just demands they may have. Mowbray bitterly refuses to parlay, but Scroop gives Westmoreland a written list of grievances to take to John of Lancaster, the king's son. The rebels then discuss how their demands will be received.

Act IV, scene 2 - In the parlay between Lancaster and the rebels, Lancaster accepts all of the rebels' demands, insisting that the king had no intention of abridging any of the rights contained in them. When peace is agreed upon, the rebels dismiss their troops. Once the rebel troops have scattered, Lancaster arrests the ringleaders and charges them with high treason, then orders his men to round up the rebel soldiers as they flee.

Act IV, scene 3 - Falstaff enters the fray late, as usual, and captures a fleeing rebel named Coleville. Lancaster then arrives, and Falstaff boasts of his prowess. Coleville is then sent off to his death, and Falstaff given leave to return by way of Gloucestershire. Word arrives that the king is seriously ill. Falstaff delivers an encomium to sack, then leaves.

Act IV, scene 4 - Back at Henry's palace at Westminster, the king is awaiting word of the successful defeat of the rebels, and still intending to embark on a crusade. He receives word that Hal is carousing in London with his friends, and mourns the plight of England after his death, to be left in the hands of such an unsteady and unreliable youth, but Warwick assures him that the young prince will soon cast off both his wild ways and his companions. Westmoreland and Harcourt arrive to

bring news of the crushing of the rebellion, both in England and in Scotland, but Henry feels increasingly sick. He collapses in a fit, and is borne from the chamber.

Act IV, scene 5 - Hal arrives, having gotten word of his father's illness. As he sits with his father, he grieves for him, then takes the crown and puts it on, believing his father to have died, and leaves the room. When the king revives, he reviles his son for caring only for the crown, but soon learns that Hal is in the next room weeping for his father's death. When Hal returns, his father excoriates him for his haste in taking the crown, again expressing his fears that after his death, license will run rampant in the kingdom. Hal insists that his action was one of true grief, and that he sees the crown as nothing more than a heavy burden that drove his father to the point of death. Henry forgives his son and gives him counsel, advising him to engage in foreign wars to keep the nobles so busy that they won't rebel against him again. Henry is then carried to his deathbed.

Act V, scene 1 - At Shallow's house in Gloucestershire, Falstaff and his cronies carouse, and Falstaff plans to regale Hal with stories of his visit.

Act V, scene 2 - Back at Westminster, we hear that the king has died. The Chief Justice, who frowned on the young prince's wild ways, fears for his status under the new ruler, as do many of the leading nobles and even Hal's brothers; they dread the thought that Falstaff should now have a prominent place at court. Hal emerges from the bedroom as King Henry V, and speaks kindly to his brothers. He reminds the Chief Justice of his harsh words to him in his youth, but the Justice argues that he was merely defending the law and taking King Henry's part, then asks Hal to imagine what response he would have desired had a son of his acted the same way. Hal commends him and assures him that he will not only retain his place in the kingdom, but also serve as the young king's chief counselor. He then insists that he has put aside his wild ways and will rule with the dignity fitting a king.

Act V, scene 3 - In Shallow's orchard, Falstaff and the two justices are still carousing, and Silence is so drunk that he astounds his companions by beginning to sing. Pistol arrives from London announcing that Hal is now king, producing much rejoicing, since Falstaff is now convinced he stands before a door open to riches and privilege. He promises all sorts of honors to his friends and vows vengeance on the Chief Justice as he mounts a horse for London.

Act V, scene 4 - On a London street, a Beadle has arrested Mistress Quickly and Doll on suspicion of involvement with the death of a man. They insist that Falstaff will free them when he arrives.

Act V, scene 5 - Outside Westminster Abbey, the crowd waits for the end of the coronation ceremony. Falstaff and his friends eagerly await the emergence of the king, sure that they will receive royal honors. Pistol tells them of Doll's imprisonment, but Falstaff assures him that he will gain her freedom. When the new king arrives, Falstaff calls out to him, but Hal refuses to acknowledge him, instead banishing him from the court on pain of death. Falstaff tells his friends that this is nothing more than a show for the benefit of the public, and that the king will call for him in private later that night. The Chief Justice orders Falstaff and the others forcibly removed, and John of Lancaster predicts that England will soon go to war with France (the subject of *Henry V*). A dancer then emerges to speak an epilogue, in which he affirms that Falstaff was not intended to represent Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard martyr.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Compare and contrast the roles played by Prince Hal's two father figures, Henry IV and Falstaff, in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*. How does each influence him? Which influences him most? How does he respond to those influences? How does he bring closure to both relationships by the end of the play?
2. Discuss the theme of betrayal in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*. Choose three examples of betrayal in the story and show how they contribute to the overall message of the play. Be specific.
3. Compare and contrast the ways the character of Falstaff is presented in the two *Henry IV* plays by William Shakespeare. How does the character change from one play to another? How is his role in the second play different from that of the first?
4. In William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*, both Henry IV and Prince Hal are presented as men who need to atone for deeds of the past. What are those deeds for which they must atone? How do they propose to make atonement? Do they succeed? Why or why not?
5. In William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*, the Lord Chief Justice and Falstaff serve as foils for one another. In what respects is this the case? What are the roles played by the two men in the eventual emergence of Prince Hal as King Henry V?
6. Evaluate the handling of the negotiations with the rebels by John of Lancaster in Gaultree Forest in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*. Was he justified in acting the way he did? Why or why not? Evaluate his actions from Scripture.
7. At the end of William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2*, the new king repudiates his relationship with Falstaff and banishes the old reprobate from court. Discuss the rightness or wrongness of Hal's behavior in this scene. Was his decision necessary in order for him to rule as a good king, or was it an unnecessary betrayal of a long-standing friendship?
8. In William Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, Parolles is a coward and a liar. Compare and contrast his characteristics with those of Falstaff in *Henry IV, part 2*. Consider their behavior in relationship to their words, both before and after their unmasking. Why is Falstaff so much more a sympathetic character than Parolles?
9. Both Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part 2* are coming-of-age stories. Compare and contrast the novel and the play, both in terms of their protagonists and in terms of the factors the authors employ to bring about the maturation process. Which of the two, David Balfour or Prince Hal, do you find more admirable? Why?