King Henry VI, Part 1 Study Guide

King Henry VI, Part 1 by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

Although Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part One* was written over four hundred years ago and deals with events almost two hundred years before that, it speaks in so many ways to modern audiences. It talks about war, marriage, politics, religion, and family in very contemporary language. In the last century and more, people have witnessed the extraordinary brutality of armed con flict. The Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the war of Yugoslavian disintegration among others have become the stuff of shared cultural experience. So, when Salisbury is wounded at the siege of Orleance by a "piece of ord'nance" (I.iv.15), the reader understands, even expects, the result: one of his eyes and pan of his face is blown off. And so, when young Talbot dies in a "sea of blood" that "did drench / His overmounting spirit" (IV.vii.14, 15), readers can imagine what he would have looked like because they have seen the terrible effects of war first hand, or in photographs, on television, or on video. With regard to marriage, Shakespeare raises the issue of its relation to love in terms that this age of palimony and prenuptial agreements can understand. When Suffolk tries to persuade the king to marry Margaret, daughter of the duke of Anjou, and prove faithless to his betrothed, the daughter of the earl of Arminack, he comments that money and legal agreements don't matter when it comes to love: "Marriage is a matter of more worth / Than to be dealt in by attorneyship" (V.v.55-56), that arranged marriages spell disaster; marriages for love promise happiness:

For what is wedlock forced, but a hell, An age of discord and continual strife? Whereas the contrary bringeth bliss, And is a pattern of celestial peace. (V.v.62-65) Some readers would probably agree with Suffolk's assertion, but there are many religions in which arranged marriages are the norm.

Henry VI, Part One is pre-eminently a play about politics. In the absence of a strong ruler (the king is very young and irresolute in this play), the Yorkists and Lancastrians vie for power. In the famous Temple Garden scene (II.iv), on the one side line up Richard Plantagenet, Warwick, Vernon, and a lawyer; on the other, Somerset, Suffolk, and Basset. For a modern audience, such factionalism is not unusual. One need think only of what happened to Yugoslavia after the death of Tito or Russia after the decline of strong, centralized Communist con trol to recall the deadly infighting that occurs in a power vacuum. A far less extreme example of the result of factionalism is the gridlock that often paralyzes the United States government due to the differing agendas of Democrats and Republicans. Shakespeare's play ends on a note of foreboding, with Suffolk vowing to continue the political game of manipulation through his love for the king's future wife, Margaret, the duke of Anjou's daughter. As for religion, *Henry VI, Part One* gives center stage to the conflict between two countries convinced that each has God on its side. At Henry V's funeral, the bishop of Winchester eulogizes: He was a king blest of the King of kings. Unto the French the dreadful Judgment Day So dreadful will not be as was his sight. The battles of the Lord of hosts he fought. (I.i.28-31)

On the French side, Joan de Pucelle (Joan of Arc) is called the "holy maid" inspired by "Heav en and our Lady" (I.ii.51, 74). The French are convinced that she has been sent

by God to rescue France from English domination; Shakespeare, how ever, in a scene that may suprise American audiences brought up to see Joan of Arc as a liberator, has her conversing with fiends (V.iii). For many English, Joan of Arc has typically been viewed as a despised figure, someone who took away land that many believe was rightfully theirs.

Plot Summary

Act I

This play, the first of a tetralogy which includes the three parts of *Henry the Sixth* and *Richard HI,* opens with the funeral of Henry V. The English nobles bemoan the death of the king, squabble among themselves, and discuss the fate of the English cause in France. A series of messengers enter and announce that most of France has been lost and Lord Talbot, England's great champion, has been captured by the French. The English nobles vow to fight and defeat the French in order to regain that country for the young king, Henry VI. The scene switches to the city of Orleance, where the French have been driven back by the English. Joan de Pucelle (Joan of Arc) rallies the dispirited French and promises that she will raise the siege. Back in London, the duke of Gloucester's and the bishop of Winchester's men fight over armaments stored in the Tower of London; their skirmish is broken up by the mayor of London. Back in France at the siege of Orleance, the French kill Sir Thomas Gargrave and the earl of Salisbury. Talbot and Pucelle fight inconclusively, buthe French nonetheless take back Orleance through her inspiration.

Act II

The English, led by Talbot and with the aid of Burgundy, manage to recapture Orleance. The countess of Auvergne invites Talbot to visit her at her castle with the intent of taking him prisoner. The attempt fails. Back in England, Richard Plantagenet (representing the Yorkist faction) and the duke of Somerset (representing the Lancastrian faction) fall to quarreling. They pluck different colored roses as emblematic of their cause. Other noblemen take sides. Somerset asserts that Richard Plantagenet's father was executed for treason. Richard visits the dying Edmund Mortimer in prison and asks him how his father died. Mortimer explains recent Eng lish dynastic history (the usurpation of the Yorkist Richard II by the Lancastrian Henry IV).

Act III

Gloucester and Winchester pick up the quarrel between them that broke out in Act I. The king manages to stop them from fighting (at least for now), and restores to Richard Plantagenet the titles that were taken from him. In France, Pucelle and the French take back Roan by stealth. The English recapture it by force of arms but not before Sir John Falstaff flees. Pucelle wins over the duke of Burgundy to the French side. Henry VI bestows on Talbot the title earl of Shrewsbury. Vernon (a Yorkist) and Basset (a Lancastrian) quarrel.

Act IV

In Paris, Henry VI is crowned king. Sir John Falstaff, who delivers Burgundy's message announcing he has changed sides, is banished for cowardice. Vernon and Basset ask the king for permission to duel; York and Somerset (their masters) themselves almost fight. The king persuades both sides to stop quarreling, but indicates his loyalty to the Lancastrian side. Talbot besieges Burdeaux, but he and his son die in the battle. The French win, largely because York and Somerset do not trust each other enough to send reinforcements.

Act V

In letters, the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor urge peace on the English, a peace to be ratified by the marriage of Henry VI to the earl of Arminack's daughter. On its way to liberate Paris, the French army is attacked by the English and Pucelle is taken prisoner. Suffolk captures Margaret, daughter of Reignier, duke of Anjou. He is struck by her beauty and decides to take her as his mistress and persuade Henry VI to marry her. In this way, he intends to control the kingdom. Reignier agrees to the marriage. Pucelle meets her father, a shepherd, but denies any relation to him. She swears she is of noble blood and also pregnant, but she is nonetheless condemned to death by burning. The English and the French make peace; the king is persuaded by Suffolk to marry Margaret even though he is betrothed to the earl of Arminack's daughter.

Characters

Alanson (Duke of Alanson):

He is a French nobleman in the entourage of Charles the Dolphin. Athe siege of Orleance, he begins by deriding the English as more attracted to eating than fighting. He ends by admiring the "courage and audacity" of such "raw-bon'd rascals" (I.ii.36, 35).

Ambassadors:

They appear before Henry VI in V.i. The ambassadors from the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor have come to encourage the king to make peace with France. The ambassador from the earl of Arminack has come to request that the king and the daughter of his master be betrothed. To this last, the king agrees.

Attendants (English and French):

These unnamed characters appear in the formal scenes (such as the funeral of Henry V and the coronation of Henry VI) to swell the numbers.

Auvergne (Countess of Auvergne):

She plays an important role in II.iii by attempting to capture Lord Talbot, England's greatest fighter, through a subterfuge. She sends him an invitation to visit her at castle (II.ii.38-43), meaning to imprison him, but he expects trouble and brings soldiers with him. When she tries to imprison him, he calls his soldiers out of hiding. She seems to be motivated by patriotism rather than by deceitfulness.

Basset:

He is a servant of the duke of Somerset and a supporter of the Lancastrian faction. He appears in two scenes: III.iv and IV.i. In the first he quarrels with Vernon (a servant of the duke of York) over some criticism he made of Vernon's master and of the white rose (emblem of the Yorkists). In the second scene (IV.i.78-136), Basset pleads his case before the king and explains in detail (IV.i.89-100) what happened. The king unconvincingly tells the disputants to forget their quarrel. Basset represents the degree to which the enmity between noblemen has tainted relations between their servants.

Bastard (Bastard of Orleance [Orleans]):

He is a relatively minor character, a member of the retinue of Charles the Dolphin. He appears in seven scenes, but only speaks in five of those. In those five, too, his comments are usually short. In one he brings the news to the Dolphin of the arrival of the "holy maid," Joan de Pucelle (I.ii.51). In another, he urges desecration of the corpses of the Talbots, father and son (IV.vii.47).

Beauford (Henry Beauford, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal):

He is an ambitious prelate who wishes to control the young king, to "sit at chiefest stern of public weal" (I.i.177). To this end, he is probably corrupt (I.i.41-43) and definitely self-serving. He sees the Lord Protector, Gloucester, as the major obstacle to his success. So, in I.iii he refuses to allow him access to the Tower of London probably because he doesn't want him to discover all the weapons he has been amassing for himself. And so, in III.i he determines to use the authority of the pope to support his plans (III.i.51). In this he succeeds, for in V.i he is made a cardinal, becoming one through bribery (III.i.51-54). It is he who announces the terms of the proposed peace between England and France (V.iv. 123-32). By so doing, he shows he is no longer "inferior to the proudest peer" (V.i.57). His ambition is arguably greater than anyone else's in the play. As he ruthlessly comments when he is alone on stage athend of V.i, he will be more powerful than Gloucester, whatever the cost. Earlier in the same scene, indeed, Exeter had recalled Henry V's prophecy about Winchester becoming "co-equal with the crown" (V.i.32-33). If he has to, Winchester will "sack this country with a mutiny," he himself says, to achieve his ends (V.i.62- 63).

Beauford (Thomas Beauford, Duke of Exeter):

He is the king's great-uncle and has been "ordain'd his special governor" (I.i.171). He is also a soothsayer. In a play of few soliloquies (a soliloquy is a speech containing nothing but truth delivered by a character alone on stage directly to the audience), Exeter has the two longest and most important: III.i.186-200 and IV.i.182-194. In the first, having seen the dissent among the English nobles (especially the duke of Gloucester and the bishop of Winchester) he predicts that the "fatal prophecy" made in the time of Henry V will come true: Henry VI will lose all the French lands (III.i.194, 196-97). In the second, he predicts civil war will result from a young king's inability to keep his warring nobles at peace: "There comes the ruin, there begins confusion" (IV.i. 193-94).

Beauford (John Beauford, Earl, afterwards Duke, of Somerset):

He is the most vocal representative of the Lancastrian group. In the Temple Garden scene (II.iv), he asserts the primacy of the Lancastrian claim to the throne and is supported by Suffolk and opposed by the Yorkists (Richard Plantagenet, Warwick, Vernon, and a lawyer). It is this dispute which flares up in Ill.i between Somerset and Warwick and in IV.i between Somerset and York. It is this dispute, too, which causes Talbot's death at Burdeaux because Somerset in a personal snub at York refuses to send him the troops that were destined for Talbot.

Bedford (Duke of Bedford):

He is the king's uncle and the regent of France. He appears in only three scenes in the play (Li, II.ii, and III.ii). In the first of these, his role is to empha size the renown of the previous king, Henry V; to attempt to smooth over the wrangling between the bishop of Winchester and the duke of Gloucester; and to predict difficult times ahead for the realm. It's an important role, for he has the most lines (42 out of 177) in the scene. In II.ii, he is briefly shown in action at the siege of Orleance, fulfilling his role as regent of France. In the third (Ill.ii), he is brought in dying of sickness and old age.

Bishop of Winchester (Henry Beauford, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal):

Se Beauford

Boy:

See Son

Burgundy (Duke of Burgundy):

He is one of the most powerful nobles in France. He begins the play on England's side as "redoubted Burgundy" (II.i.8), and is crucial to the English victories at Orleance and Roan. He goes over to the French side in III.iii after parleying with Pucelle. In IV.i, news of his "monstrous treachery!" (IV.i.61) is brought to the English, and in response Talbot moves to besiege Burdeaux, the largest town in Burgundy's dukedom. Burgundy last appears fleeing from the English (see the stage direction at V.iii.29). Burgundy also performs three other minor roles: first, to vilify Pucelle ("vile fiend and shameless courtezan!" [III.ii.45]); second, to praise young John Talbot as a courageous enemy (rV.vii.44); third, to indicate that the French fear even Lord Talbot's ghost (V.ii.16).

Captains:

One captain receives Talbot's whispered instructions in II.ii. Another appears in Ill.ii to judge Sir John Falstaff's flight from the fighting before Roan: "Cowardly knight, il fortune follow thee!" (III.ii.109). A third accompanies Sir William Lucy in an effort to get aid from the duke of Somerset for the beset Lord Talbot fighting at Burdeaux (IV.iv).

Cardinal of Winchester (Henry Beauford, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal):

See Beauford

Charles (Charles the Dolphin [Dau phin], afterwards King of France):

As the heir to the throne of France, Charles fights in this play at every major engagement with the English: the siege of Orleance, the fight for Roan, and the battle of Burdeaux. He also ratifies the terms of peace with the English at the camp of the duke of York at Anjou (V.iv). His personality is not strongly delineated. Rather, Shakespeare has him utter the expected responses to French or English victory. He is cunning enough to test Pucelle's powers in I.ii.60-63. He is also sufficiently disingenuous to agree to peace with England with no intention of keeping his word (V.iv. 155-168). He is not a strong fighter (he is beaten in mock combat by Pucelle [I.ii.93-105]), but he is chivalrous enough to stop the Bastard of Orleance from disfiguring Talbot's body (IV.vii.49-50). The English repeatedly accuse him of sleeping with Pucelle. However, this is perhaps more an indication of Shakespeare's intent to discredit the French (England's traditional enemy) by suggesting that Charles consorts with devils than to indicate immorality as such on his part.

Countess of Auvergne:

See Auvergne

Dolphin (Charles the Dolphin [Dauphin], afterwards King of France):

See Charles

Edmund (Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March):

See Mortimer

Exeter (Thomas Beauford, Duke of Exeter):

See Beauford

Fiends:

These devils appear to Pucelle before the battle at Angiers in V.iii. She summons them in hopes that they will make her victorious as they have before. This time they cannot help her. Her actions are perhaps intended to leave the audience ino doubt that Pucelle is inspired by the Devil not by God.

Gargrave (Sir Thomas Gargrave):

He appears in I.iv at the siege of Orleance in company with Salisbury, Talbot, and Sir William Glansdale. He is killed by cannon fire.

General:

He appears on the battlements of Burdeaux (in IV.ii) to respond to Talbot's challenge to surrender the city. He refuses to surrender, and instead correctly predicts that Talbot will finally be defeated and killed. Shakespeare also uses him to praise Talbot as a valiant and dangerous enemy of the French (IV.ii.15, 31-32).

Falstaff (Sir John Falstaff):

He is not to be confused with the Sir John

Falstaff of *Henry IV, Part One* and *Two* ,whose death is reported in *Henry V,* or with the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* This Falstaff is a thorough coward with none of the other Falstaffs' charm and humor. In I.i. 110-34 and I.iv.35-37, it is related how in the retreat from Orleance, his cowardice led to Talbot's capture. In III.ii. 104-09, he flees from the fighting around Roan. In IV.i.9-47, he makes the mistake of bearing a letter from the duke of Burgundy to Henry VI. Talbot accuses him of cowardice and strips him of his knighthood. The king then banishes Falstaff "on pain of death" (IV.i.47).

Glansdale (Sir William Glansdale):

He appears in I.iv at the siege of Orleance in company with Salisbury, Talbot, and Sir Thomas Gargrave. He is not injured by the cannon fire that kills Salisbury and Gargrave.

Gloucester (Duke of Gloucester):

He is the Lord Protector of the young Henry VI. As such, it is his task to "proclaim young Henry king" (I.i.169), which he does in IV.i. He wrangles constantly with the king's uncle, the bishop (later cardinal) of Winchester. In Li, he accuses the bishop of Winchester of using his religious office for political ends. In I.iii, he visits the Tower of London to check on the munitions and armaments that the young king will need for the wars in France, but is stopped from entering on orders from Winchester (who may have been taking weapons for his own use or profit). In III.i he takes his quarrel before the king, who manages to reconcile both the duke and the bishop but only temporarily.

In IV.i he performs two functions: getting the governor of Paris to swear loyalty to the king, and interpreting the import of Burgundy's letter in which he announces his switch to the French side. In V.i, he urges the king to make peace with France and to seal the agreement by marrying the earl of Arminack's daughter. In the final scene he argues unsuccessfully against the king's decision to break his betrothal to the daughter of the earl of Arminack and instead marry Margaret, the daughter of the duke of Anjou. He can only helplessly and correctly predict what will follow from the king's decision: "Ay, grief, I fear me, both at first and last" (V.v.102).

Although Winchester tries to paint him other wise, Gloucester is a trusted, honest advisor to the king. As the king himself says, "When Gloucester says the word, King Henry goes" (III.i.183). Gloucester's quarrel with Winchester shows that not all enmity in this play is between the Houses of York and Lancaster, for both men are Lancastrians (de scended, that is, from John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster). Rather, this quarrel is between the religious and secular branches of the government.

Governor of Paris:

He appears only in IV.i in a non-speaking role. He kneels before the bishop of Winchester and takes an oath of loyalty to the newly-crowned king, Henry VI.

Henry (King Henry VI of England):

The young King Henry VI is in every way the opposite of Henry V, his well-loved, warlike father. He is ineffectual, weak, and inconsistent. He is easily led by those around him. Shakespeare underlines this weakness by delaying the king's first entrance until half way through the play (III.i) and by having him appear in a total of only five scenes (this in a play bearing the king's name). It is as if he really doesn't matter in the affairs of his own kingdom.

When the king does appear, his behavior does not bode well for the future of his realm. In III.i, he relies upon what he hopes is the power of prayer ("if prayers might prevail" [III.i.67]) to make Gloucester and Winchester friends instead of ene mies. He manages to get the two nobles to shake hands, but Winchester makes it clear in an aside that the

act means nothing to him. (An aside is a state ment that a character makes directly to the audience without the other characters overhearing him.) He elevates Richard Plantagenet to the titles of earl of Cambridge and duke of York, both of which are indeed rightfully Plantagenet's, but he does nothing to quell Somerset's anger athe move. Later (in IV.i), he mediates the dispute over power between York and Somerset by eloquently arguing for the importance of domestic harmony; he then rather foolishly sides with the Lancastrians (and Somerset) by pinning a red rose to his clothes even as he denies any favoritism.

At the beginning of the final act, the king sensibly agrees to peace and to a marriage intended to knit together the royal families of England and France. In the final scene, however, the king jeopardizes everything by rapidly agreeing with Suffolk's arguments in favor of breaking his betrothal to the earl of Arminack's daughter and marrying the duke of Anjou's daughter instead. One can feel sympathy for a young king "perplexed with a thousand cares" (V.v.95), but in the context of the dramatic action one must note his rashness too.

The young king, observers note, is pious, foolish, and lacking in self-knowledge. He respects his uncle Gloucester but doesn't take his sensible advice regarding his marriage. He is aware of the disputes within his kingdom but fails to do anything substantive about them. He admires Talbot's mar tial prowess, talks about it movingly, and elevates him to an earldom, that of Shrewsbury (III.iv.16- 27). However, he then indirectly causes his death by spurring him on to attack Burdeaux, the principal city of the traitrous duke of Burgundy, without having reconciled the two noblemen (York and Somerset) whose soldiers are essential to victory in any such attack. He considers himself more a scholar than a lover ("And fitter is my study and my books / Than wanton dalliance with a paramour" [V.i.22-23]), but soon finds himself lusting after Margaret, the duke of Anjou's beautiful daughter, even if costs him his kingdom: So am I driven by breath of her renown, Either to suffer shipwrack, or arrive Where I may have fruition of her love. (V.v.7-9)

Heralds:

These appear in two formal scenes in this play as special messenger or attendants. The first occa sion (Li) is the funeral of Henry V; the second (IV.vii) is the recovery of the bodies of the Talbots, father and son, from the French. The heralds have non-speaking parts. of the professions, too. The lawyer picks a white rose because, from a legal point of view, he finds the Lancastrian argument weak.

Lord Talbot (Lord Talbot, afterwards Earl of Shrewsbury):

See Talbot

Humphrey of Gloucester:

See Gloucester

Jailers (to Mortimer):

These appear in only one scene, II.v, accompanying the dying Mortimer.

Joan de Aire:

See Pucelle

Joan de Pucelle:

See Pucelle

John Talbot (John Talbot, son of Lord Talbot):

See Talbot

Keepers:

See Jailers

Lawyer:

He only appears in one scene (II.iv) and has only four lines. The scene, however, is the crucial one (in the Temple Garden) when supporters of the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions pluck roses (white or red) as emblematic of their particular loyalty. Shakespeare uses the lawyer as an indication that the divisions run deep in the country; they involve not only the nobility and their servants but members

Lords (English and French):

These unnamed characters appear in the formal scenes (such as the funeral of Henry V and the coronation of Henry VI) to swell the numbers.

Lucy (Sir William Lucy):

He is a messenger sent by Talbot, who is faced by superior French forces at Burdeaux. He meets York on the plains of Gascony (in IV.iii) and entreats him to send reinforcements. In the next scene (IV.iv), Lucy meets Somerset, who responds to his request for aid by blaming York and Talbot for the rashness of the military campaign against Burgundy. Finally, Lucy appears in IV.vii to claim the bodies of the Talbots, father and son, from the French.

Margaret (daughter of Reignier):

She is the daughter of Reignier, duke of Anjou, and the future queen of England. She sees herself as possessing "a pure unspotted heart, / Never yet taint with love" (V.iii. 182-83). She is captured by the earl of Suffolk after the French have been routed at Angiers (V.iii), and is so exquisitely beautiful that he is enraptured by her. Within ninety lines of her first appearance, Margaret has acceded to his wish to have her become queen of England as long as her father agrees.

Master Gunner (of Orleance):

In I.iv, he is indirectly responsible for the deaths of the earl of Salisbury and Sir Thomas Gargrave athe siege of Orleance through a clever military stratagem. dies at the end of this scene, but not before he names Richard Plantagenet his heir.

Mayor of London:

In I.iii, he breaks up the fight between the bishop of Winchester's and the duke of Gloucester's servingmen. The mayor issues an official proclamation (I.iii.74-79) that both sides must disperse to their homes and never use traditional weapons again "upon pain of death" (I.iii.79). He appears for a second time in III.i, this time before the king himself, to complain that Winchester's and Glouces ter's men have now taken to attacking each other□ in light of his proclamation□with stones. The way in which the mayor's proclamation is evaded is an indication of how deep the resentments run between the two sides.

Messengers:

These appear throughout the play to carry news externally between the French and English forces and internally among the two sides themselves. In I.i, three of them appear in sequence to the English nobles assembled for the funeral of Henry V. For about 10 lines (I.i.57-161), the messengers dominate the discussion as bringers of bad news. The first lets the nobles know that England has lost seven French provinces in quick succession because of their factionalism. The second adds to the misery by

announcing that al the land in France has been lost except for a few minor towns, the Dolphin has been crowned at Rheims, and the French nobility has formed an alliance. The third reports that Talbot, England's greatest general and fighter, has been captured at the siege of Orleance through the cowardice of Sir John Falstaff.

Mortimer (Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March):

He appears in only one scene (II.v), but his role is a vital one. Mortimer is the cousin of Henry VI, and the rightful heir to the throne after the death without children of Richard II. His role is to indicate the weakness of Henry VI's claim to the throne and to explain to his nephew, Richard Plantagenet, why his (Plantagenet's) father, the earl of Cambridge, was executed. In lines 61-92, he argues that the claim of the House of York is superior to that of the House of Lancaster because the former derives from a son of Edward III (Lionel, duke of Clarence) who was older than the son of Edward III, John of Gaunt, on whom the Lancastrians base their claim. Mortimer

Officer:

Employed by the mayor of London, he delivers the official proclamation (in I.iii.74-79) announcing that the servingmen of the bishop of Winchester and the duke of Gloucester must return to their homes and□on penalty of death□lay down their weapons.

Orleance (Bastard of Orleance [Orleans]):

See Bastard

Papal Legate:

In V.i, he is one of the three ambassadors who appear before Henry VI with several formal requests. The cardinal of Winchester speaks to him when the two are alone on stage and makes it clear that he bribed the pope in order to be promoted from bishop to cardinal.

Plantagenet (Richard Plantagenet, afterwards Duke of York):

He is the Yorkist claimant to the throne after the death of Edmund Mortimer. His first appearance is in II.iv, the scene in the Temple Garden. Somerset asserts the primacy of the Lancastrian claim (and hence the right of Henry VI to reign) in response to Plantagenet's offstage assertion of the legality of the Yorkist claim. In response, Plantagenet demands that, just as he has done, those who agree with his position should pluck a white rose from the nearby bush to demonstrate their agreement with his views. Warwick, Vernon, and a lawyer side with him. The discussion then degenerates

into invective and threats, with Plantagenet promising Somerset and Suffolk that he will avenge himself for their denial of the Yorkist claim even though he knows that wholesale death will result: "This quarrel will drink blood another day," he remarks to his friends (II.iv. 133).

He next appears in III.i to receive from the king the title taken away from him because his father was considered a traitor. Henry VI also restores to him the title duke of York that became his by right after the death of his brother. York now pledges allegiance to the king. He does not, however, forget his quarrel with Somerset. On the contrary, his servant (Vernon) wrangles with Somerset's servant (Basset) almost to the point of dueling, and both York and Somerset are ready to fight each other before the king forces them to make a temporary peace. In IV.iii, their quarrel causes York to abandon his promised aid to the beleaguered Talbot at Burdeaux because Somerset fails to send him the men he needs.

In V.iv, he brings forth the captured Pucelle and curses her as "wicked and vile," "vicious," a "strumpet," a "sorceress," and a "foul accursed minister of hell!" (V.iv.16, 35, 84, 1, 93). In this role, York is no longer being used by Shakespeare to illustrate the dangers of civil strife (York vs. Lancaster); rather, he becomes the mouthpiece for the traditional hatred of the French in general and of Pucelle in particular.

Pole:

See Suffolk

Porter:

He is the servant of the countess of Auvergne in II.iii. He carries outhe stratagem by means of which Auvergne hopes to capture Talbot.

Pucelle (Joan de Pucelle, also called Joan of Aire):

The audience first hears of Pucelle from the French point of view. To them she is a "divinest creature" (I.vi.4) and "holy maid" ordained by God to rid France of the English (I.ii.51-54). At first to the English she is similarly godlike, a "holy prophetess new risen up" (I.iv.102). Within a very few lines, however, the English opinion changes. Lord Talbot calls her a "high-minded strumpet" and a "witch" (I.v.12, 21). The intensity of the contrast between the French and English views never lessens after Act I. On the contrary, it becomes more obvious. Talbot calls Pucelle a "damned sorceress" (III.ii.38) after her temporary victory at Roan; the French feel she deserves "a coronet of gold" (III.iii.89) after persuading Burgundy to switch to the French side. Young Talbot terms Pucelle a "giglot wench" at the battle of Burdeaux even though she considers herself a "maid" (IV.vii.41, 38).

Shakespeare's portrait of Joan de Pucelle is unflattering, but typical of the English attitude to Joan of Arc at that time. The play portrays her as a perjurer, for she says at I.ii.72 that she is the daughter of a shepherd, but strenuously denies that parentage when she meets her father towards the end of the play (V.iv.8-9). The play also depicts her as promiscuous as well as a liar, for on the one hand she can call herself a "maid" (IV.vii.38) while on the other (and in an effort to avoid being burned at the stake) assert that she is pregnant and offer as possible fathers the Dolphin, the duke of Alanson, or the duke of Anjou (V.iv.60-78). Finally, and most importantly, the play portrays Pucelle as coming not from God but from the Devil, for she consorts with "fiends" in V.iii in a last desperate effort at victory and is even prepared to sell her soul for the same. In Shakespeare's play, Pucelle was what the English chroniclers said she was: a formidable opponent inspired by the Devil.

Reignier (Reignier, Duke of Anjou):

He is a trusted member of the entourage of Charles the Dolphin. He is the father of Margaret, whom Henry VI determines, on the advice of Suffolk, to marry. His reward for agreeing to the match is to be allowed to keep his lands, the provinces of Maine and Anjou, free from English domination.

Richard (Richard Plantagenet, after wards Duke of York):

See Plantagenet

Salisbury (Earl of Salisbury):

He appears in only one scene (I.iv). In it he is killed by cannon fire from the French lines around Orleance. His death symbolizes the brutality of war. He dies after part of his face is blown away.

Scout:

He brings the news in V.ii to the French that although they have defeated the English at Burdeaux, the enemy has regrouped and is ready to fight again.

Sentinels:

In II.i they are told by a French sergeant to keep watch and let him know if any English soldiers try to sneak into Orleance. Shakespeare uses them to make a biting social comment: that war is always hardest on the common soldier (II.i.5-7).

Sergeant:

A French soldier, he instructs the sentinels in II.i to inform him in the guardhouse if any English soldiers try to recapture Orleance.

Servant:

He supports the dying Lord Talbot in IV.vii and shows him where his dead son lies.

Servingmen:

These belong to two rivals, the duke of Gloucester and the bishop (later cardinal) of Winchester. They clash in I.iii as Gloucester is trying to enter the Tower of London to discover whether the place has been run properly since the death of Henry V. Winchester, who has instructed Woodvile (the keeper of the Tower) to deny Gloucester entrance, turns up with his men at the same time as Gloucester does with his. The mayor of London has to break up the skirmish. The servingmen, now forbidden to carry arms, reappear in III.i hurling stones at each other in a continution of the feud.

Shepherd:

He is the father of Pucelle. In V.iv he meets her as she is being led to the stake to be burned. She denies that he is her father, and does so in such an offensive way ("Decrepit miser! base ignoble wretch!" [V.iv.7]) that he responds: "O, burn her, burn her! hanging is to good" (V.iv.33).

Soldiers:

Only two soldiers have speaking parts: An English soldier (in II.i) states that he intends to pillage Orleance (II.i.78-81); a French soldier (in III.ii) says the same thing about Roan: "Our sacks shall be a mean to sack the city" (III.ii.10).

Son (of the Master Gunner):

He fires the shot in I.iv that kills Sir Thomas Gargrave and the earl of Salisbury.

Suffolk (Earl of Suffolk):

He is a supporter of the Lancastrian claim to the throne and, so, sides with Somerset against Warwick and Richard Plantagenet in the Temple Garden scene (II.iv). His major role occurs towards thend of the play. In V.iii he captures Margaret, the duke of Anjou's daughter, and falls in love with her beauty. He decides to try have the king marry her

even though to do so would break his betrothal to the earl of Arminack's daughter. In V.v he succeeds in persuading the king to marry Margaret, intending to rule the king through his wife.

Talbot (John Talbot, son of Lord Talbot):

He is in every way as brave as his father, with whom he dies in the fighting at Burdeaux. According to Sir William Lucy (IV.iii.37-38), John Talbot sees his father for the first time in seven years as comrades-in-arms at Burdeaux; that fact makes their meeting and their deaths more poignant. John Talbot refuses to fly from the battle despite his father's pleading; rather, he distinguishes himself by feats of arms.

Talbot (Lord Talbot, afterwards Earl of Shrewsbury):

Lord Talbot is the great soldier and general on the English side□the "Frenchmen's only scourge" (IV.vii.77), as Sir William Lucy puts it. He is an altruistic, intelligent hero in a play characterized by self-interest and double dealing. In I.iv he describes his imprisonment athe hands of the French in terms that display an unshakeable will. In II.iii he outwits the countess of Auvergne when she deceitfully attempts to capture him. He says (at I.iv. 109) that he will make "a quagmire" of the "mingled brains" of the Dolphin and Pucelle. He does his best to do so throughout the play. It is due to his courage and intelligence that the English recapture Orleance and Roan. It is due to his martial achievements that even the name of Talbot strikes fear into the French. He dies in battle at Burdeaux (IV.vii) as a result of squabbling between the dukes of York and Somerset.

Somerset (John Beauford, Earl, afterwards Duke, of Somerset):

See Beauford

Vernon:

He is a servant of the duke of York and a supporter of the Yorkist faction. He appears in two scenes: III.iv and IV.i. In the first he quarrels with Basset (a servant of the duke of Somerset) over some criticism he made of Basset's master and of the red rose (emblem of the Lancastrians). Vernon strikes Basset, and then promises to seek redress from the king. In the second scene (IV.i.78-136), Vernon asks the king for permission to fight, and explains events from his point of view. The king unconvincingly tells the disputants to forget their quarrel. Vernon represents the degree to which the enmity between noblemen has tainted relations be tween their servants.

Warders:

These are officials at the Tower of London. In I.iii they refuse entrance to the duke of Gloucester on the orders of the bishop of Winchester.

Warwick (Earl of Warwick):

He appears in al the formal court scenes in the play (the funeral of Henry V [Li], the elevation of Plantagenet to the dukedom of York [III.i], and the coronation of Henry VI [IV.i]). His major role, however, relates to the rivalry between the Houses of Lancaster and York. In the Temple Garden scene (II.iv), he sides with the Yorkists (Richard Plantagenet, Vernon, and a lawyer) against the Lancastrians (Somerset and Suffolk), but only after he has been called upon by Somerset to act as judge and has rendered his opinion that the arguments on both

sides are based on obscure points, "nice sharp quillets of the law" (II.iv. 17). He prophesies cor rectly that the dispute between Yorkists and Lancastrians will lead to bloody civil war. He also renders two other judgments important to the play: he considers the enmity between the bishop of Winchester and the duke of Gloucester dangerous to the stability of the realm (III.i.112-117), and he characterizes the king as a good speaker but a weak ruler (IV.i.174-175). He is the member of the aristocracy to whom the others look for advice. It is he, for example, who assures York that the peace between France and England will be to England's benefit (V.iv.l13-115).

Watch:

They are fooled by Pucelle in III.ii into letting an advance party of French soldiers into Roan.

William de la Pole:

See Suffolk

Winchester (Henry Beauford, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal):

See Beauford

Woodvile:

He is the lieutenant of the Tower of London. In I.iii, he confirms his warders' refusal (on the orders of the bishop of Winchester) to allow the duke of Gloucester into the Tower to inspect its stores of weapons.

Further Study

Bevington, David. "The Domineering Female in *1 Henry VI." Shakespeare Studies 2* (1966): 51-58. Bevington shows that the motif of the strong woman in *1 Henry VI* intentionally parallels the theme of disagreement and division in the play. Blanpied, John W. "'Art and Baleful Sorcery': The Counterconsciousness of *Henry VI, Part I." Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 213- 227.

Blanpied argues that the play is intentionally ironic and iconoclastic, a deliberate undermining of tradition. Boas, Frederick S. "Joan of Arc in Shakespeare, Schiller and Shaw." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2 (1951): 35-45. Boas argues that Shakespeare's portrait of Joan of Arc as inconsistent matches the pejorative view in Holinshed, his source.

Brockbank, J. M. "The Frame of Disorder: *Henry VI."* In *Early Shakespeare,* edited by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, 73-100. London: Edward Arnold, 1961. Brockbank traces the way in which Shakespeare alters his sources in order to stress the importance of pageantry in history.

Burckhardt, Sigurd. "'I Am But Shadow of Myself': C e 28, no. 2 (June 1967): 139-158. Burckhardt shows how the language in the play consists of a self-assertion destructive to long-term goals and good order.

Candido, Joseph. "Getting Loose in the *Henry VI* Plays." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 392-406.

Candido demonstrates that the *Henry VI* trilogy is unified by repeated scenes of capture and escape.

Greer, Clayton Alvis.'The Place of *1 Henry VI* in the York- Lancaster Trilogy." *PMLA* 53 (1938): 687-710.

Greer hypothesizes that *Henry VI, Part One* may be based on an earlier version of the play called *Talbot* or *Harry the Sixth.*

Kirschbaum, Leo. "The Authorship of *1 Henry VI." PMLA* 67 (1952): 809-822.

Kirschbaum provides evidence for *Henry VI, Part One* being Shakespeare's work and for its being written before *Henry VI, Part Two* and *Three.*

McNeir, Waldo F. "Comedy in Shakespeare's Yorkist Te tralogy." *Pacific Coast Philology 9* (Apr. 1974): 48-55.

Shows the presence of humor in *Henry VI, Part One, Two,* and *Three,* and *Richard III.* In *Henry VI, Part One,* the cowardice of Falstaff is intended to be funny.

Pratt, Samuel M. "Shakespeare and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Myth." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1965): 201-216.

Pratt shows how Shakespeare enhances the mythic quality of Humphrey as the "good duke."

Riggs, David. "The Hero in History: A Reading *of Henry VI."* In *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories[:]* Henry VI *and Its Literary Tradition,* 93-139. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Argues that *Henry VI, Part One* is meant to enshrine "exemplary truths" from fifteenth-century English history.

Sheriff, William E. "Shakespeare's Use of the Native Comic Tradition in His Early English History Plays." *Wisconsin Studies in Literature 2* (1965): 11-17.

Sheriff traces the way in which Shakespeare uses humor in his history plays (including *Henry VI, Part One).*

Turner, Robert Y. "Characterization in Shakespeare's Early History Plays." ELH 31, no. 3 (Sept. 1964): 241-258.

Turner demonstrates how Shakespeare's characters in the *Henry VI* trilogy are static rather than dynamic.

Wineke, Donald R. "The Relevance of Machiavelli to Shake speare: A Discussion of *1 Henry VI." Clio* 13, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 17-36.

Wineke delineates the ways in which Shakespeare's political viewpoint is Machiavellian even if he never read the Italian's works.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

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- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
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- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
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- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Shakespeare for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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