King Henry VI, Part 2 Study Guide

King Henry VI, Part 2 by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

Although Shakespeare wrote for an earlier time, his concerns are so well staged and so poetically presented that they produce powerful echoes for a late twentieth-century audience whose knowledge of the Wars of the Roses is slight at best. *Henry VI, Part Two* is preoccupied with three issues of contemporary relevance: the definition of legitimate authority; the requirements for good government; and the role of the family.

England under Henry VI is in chaos. In part this chaos is the result of Henry VI's uncertainty about whether his right to the crown is legitimate. The duke of York certainly has a better claim based on blood (he traces his line back to a son of Edward III who was older than the son from whom Henry VI derives his claim), but Henry VI has a better claim based on power (his grandfather, Henry IV, overthrew Richard II).

In democratic countries power is derived from the ballot box, but there have been several occasions in recent times in Europe and elsewhere when charges of voter fraud or tampering with the ballot box have made it uncertain who is the legitimate leader. One need think only of events in the former Yugoslavia as an instance. In 1996, for example, Slobodan Milosevic used the Serbian Supreme Court to validate some election results that were favorable to him but questionable. More subtly, one can speculate on what form of the vote best represents the balance of power in a country. Proportional representation most accurately registers the patchwork of opinion in any given country, but that method has led Italy, for example, to change its government more than once a year since the end of the Second World War. From another perspective, one can ask whether a minority government should be allowed to rule in a democracy. Such a government was in power in Britain, for example, in 1979 and 1996. The question comes down to how one defines legitimate authority. That question applies as much to modern democracies or republics as to fifteenth-century monarchies.

England under Henry VI is in chaos for another reason, however. Henry VI governs poorly. He is unable to exert the authority that he has as king. For example, when Suffolk arrests Gloucester on trumpedup charges (III.i.95-222), the king does nothing to stop the arrest even though he knows that Gloucester is loyal. Instead, he simply leaves the stage in tears, unable to cope. Later, in III.ii.236-41, when Warwick and Winchester duel in his presence, the king merely issues the mildest of rebukes. When it comes to decisions, the king simply agrees to what his influential subjects want (III.i.316-17). As a monarch, Shakespeare's Henry VI fails to make the effective decisions that result in good government. Modern democracies and republics are faced by the same need for effective decision making, but that need has not always been fulfilled. John Major in Britain has not, many feel, been as effective as Margaret Thatcher in making the sort of consistent decisions that Prime Ministers are expected to make. In the United States, polls have indicated that people feel that the House of Representatives and the Senate sometimes create gridlock rather than pass legislation, and that President Clinton, like other presidents before him, has sometimes failed to steer a clear course for the nation. The same sorts of criticisms were leveled at earlier presidents such as Grant, Wilson, Hoover, and Coolidge.

Besides the question of how power is derived and used, *Henry VI, Part Two* devotes much time to the role of family. On the one hand, the prominence of family causes unflattering comparisons: Henry VI is in no way a match for his father, Henry V (perhaps the most beloved monarch in English history). On the other, it becomes a means to perpetuate revenge. *Henry VI, Part Three* has, as a major theme, the importance of vengeance in a society where the idea of legal justice has yet to be fully developed. The end of *Henry VI, Part Two* foreshadows that theme in the death of old Clifford at York's hands and the bloodthirsty cry of revenge from his son. Young Clifford will be merciless: Henceforth I will not have to do with pity. Meet I an infant of the house of York, Into as many gobbets will I cut it As wild Medea young Absyrtus did; In cruelty will I seek out my fame. (V.ii.56-60)

Although such a statement is an extreme one, any audience watching this play can probably think of examples of these two issues: the difficulty of the son living up to the father's expectations, and the families that feud with one another long after the initial cause of conflict has been forgotten.

Plot Summary

Act I

At the court, the marriage of King Henry VI and Margaret, daughter of the duke of Anjou, is announced and the terms of the peace agreement with France is read out. Neither pleases the nobles. The nobles squabble among themselves about who will have power in a country ruled by a weak king. In the next scene, the duchess of Gloucester reveals her ambitions for her husband, Lord Protector and heir to the throne. She intends to summon a witch to predict future events. When she does so, Buckingham and York arrest her and plan the downfall of her husband. In a scene involving the common people, a petitioner accuses his master of arguing that the duke of York is the rightful heir to the throne. When the case is brought before the king, he asks for a ruling from Gloucester, who judges that the master and his servant must fight in single combat to decide the truth. Gloucester also decides that Somerset will be regent in France rather than York.

Act II

This act opens with a falconing scene full of allusions to the high-flying ambitions of the nobility. To the assembled nobles and the king and queen, a commoner named Saunder Simpcox, and his wife enter claiming that his sight has been restored by a miracle worked by Saint Albon. The king believes their story; Gloucester cleverly reveals their deception and sentences them to be whipped. Buckingham enters and announces the arrest of the duchess of Gloucester for consorting with witches and plotting the downfall of the king. The king banishes her for life, orders the other conspirators to be executed, and strips Gloucester of his role as Lord Protector. The duke of Gloucester speaks with his wife as she goes to her banishment; she predicts his downfall at the hands of his enemies. In a brief scene in between the announcement of the duchess's crime and her punishment, York explains to Salisbury and his son, Warwick, why his claim to the throne is superior to the king's. They swear allegiance to York. Meanwhile Gloucester is summoned to appear at the next session of Parliament.

Act III

In Parliament, the queen, Suffolk, Winchester, Buckingham, and York outline the supposed faults in Gloucester that should lead the king to arrest him. The queen argues that Gloucester is an ambitious man and therefore dangerous. Suffolk speaks of Gloucester as deceitful and suggests he may have had a role in the duchess of Gloucester's plot against the king. Winchester, York, and Buckingham also make note of Gloucester's alleged offences, but the king defends Gloucester. Somerset, the regent in France, enters to announce that all the English lands in France have been lost. Gloucester enters and is arrested by Suffolk for high treason. The king makes no effort to save Gloucester even though he thinks him loyal, but leaves the stage distracted with grief. The queen, Suffolk, York, and Winchester decide to kill Gloucester before he even comes to trial. A messenger enters to announce that a dangerous rebellion has broken out in Ireland; the nobles decide to send York to quell the uprising. York sees this as an opportunity to win the crown and mentions the workers' uprising led by Jack Cade that will soon occur and which he has incited. Two murderers, on the orders of Suffolk and Winchester, kill Gloucester and try to make it look like a natural death. Warwick examines Gloucester's body, explains why it is clear that he was murdered, and accuses Suffolk and Winchester of the crime. Suffolk and Warwick fight. Salisbury enters to announce that the common people want Suffolk to be banished or put to death for the murder of Gloucester, whom they loved. In response, the king banishes Suffolk from England. Vaux enters to announce that Winchester is near death from a sudden illness. On his deathbed, Winchester admits to the king, Salisbury, and Warwick that he is guilty of Gloucester's murder.

Act IV

Suffolk is captured by pirates and executed. Cade and his men enter. Before he fights the king's men led by Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother, Cade awards himself a knighthood and names himself Sir John Mortimer (a legitimate claimant to the throne). The two sides fight; Cade's is victorious. The king and queen accompanied by Buckingham and Lord Say are told of the rebels' progress and demands; the queen bemoans the death of Suffolk, whose head is brought in. The rebels' successes continue so that the king has to retreat to Killingworth. The rebels, led by an increasingly power-mad Cade, capture Lord Say and his son-in-law and execute both. Buckingham and Lord Clifford parley with Cade and his men. Cade's men go over to the king's side, persuaded by the promise of a pardon and patriotic talk of the need to fight in France not in England. Cade flees, goes into hiding, and is killed by a landowner, Alexander Iden, who finds him stealing food from his garden. In the meantime, York has returned from Ireland with an army and demanded that the traitorous Somerset be arrested. The king sends Buckingham to parley with York and orders Somerset to be confined in the Tower of London.

Act V

Camped at Saint Albons, York is temporarily appeased at Buckingham's news that Somerset has been imprisoned in the Tower. Then the queen enters accompanied by Somerset, who is clearly free. In a rage, York asserts his right to the throne. Somerset arrests him for treason, and the nobles line up in support of one group or the other. The Cliffords side with the king; York's sons, Edward and Richard, support their father as do Warwick and Salisbury. The two sides fight at the battle of Saint Albons. York and his supporters win. Old Clifford is slain by York; young Clifford (who discovers his father's body) swears brutal vengeance on York and his family. Richard, son of York and the future Richard III, kills Somerset. The king and queen flee back to London. York and his allies follow in hot pursuit intent on capturing the king before he can hold a parliament and declare them traitors.

Characters

Aldermen:

These non-speaking characters appear at II.i.65. They enter carrying the crippled Simpcox, who has supposedly regained his sight through a miracle.

Asmath:

See Spirit

Attendants:

These non-speaking characters appear in a couple of scenes (III.ii and IV.viii) to add to the importance of the nobility.

Beadle:

He appears at II.i. 144 to whip Simpcox so as to discover whether he is truly lame.

Beauford (Cardinal Beauford, Bishop of Winchester):

Usually referred to as Winchester in the play, he is mercilessly ambitious and a "proud prelate," as Gloucester terms him (Li. 142). His sole concern is power; this he tries to achieve with the aid of Suffolk. He is the first to urge that Gloucester's Lord Protectorship be taken away from him (I.i.147-64), and he schemes with Suffolk to achieve that end. In I.iii.128-29, he seconds Suffolk's call for Gloucester's resignation, alleging his over-taxation of the laity and the clergy. In II.i. 14-52, he continues his battle with Gloucester even to the point of agreeing to a duel. Such a fight, however, never takes place, for when the duchess of Gloucester is banished for witchcraft and treason (II.iii.1-4, 9-13) after falling foul of a trap laid by Winchester and Suffolk (I.ii.93-101), the king strips Gloucester of his Lord Protectorship (II.iii.22-27).

For Winchester and several other nobles, however, to see Gloucester stripped of authority is not enough. They want him tried for treason. In III.i, they try to persuade the king that Gloucester is a traitor. Suffolk arrests him, and without serious protest from the king Winchester's men take him away to prison (188). That is still not enough. Now, they want him dead, and Winchester and Suffolk pledge to do the deed (III.i.267-77). By the beginning of III.ii Gloucester has been murdered, and by the end of III.iii Winchester himself is dead from a "grievous sickness" (IILii.370). Haunted by the ghost of the murdered Gloucester, Winchester's last words from his deathbed are to ask for poison with which to end the torture of a guilty conscience (III.iii.17-18).

Bevis (George Bevis):

He is the first of Jack Cade's men to make an appearance (IV.ii.l). He humorously points out the problems with the English government and bemoans the lack of respect shown to workers. He brings in the captured Lord. Say at IV.vii.23.

Bolingbrook (Roger Bolingbrook):

He appears in I.iv and with Southwell and Jordan conjures up a spirit who answers the duchess of Gloucester's questions about the fate of the king, Suffolk, and Somerset. He is arrested at I.iv.41, and condemned by the king to death by hanging (II.iii.8).

Buckingham (Duke of Buckingham):

He is one of the nobles whose actions collectively weaken the king's ability to govern. In the first scene of the play he reveals how much he wants to get rid of Gloucester, Lord Protector to the king (169). He next appears in I.iii discussing with the king and his nobles who should be the regent in France. He appears to favor Somerset over York, but his real concern is with the ruin of Gloucester. This he thinks he can achieve through destroying Gloucester's wife, Eleanor (150-51). In I.iv he is on hand to arrest her for witchcraft and treason. In II.i he enters to tell the king of the duchess of Gloucester's arrest. He appears in III.i and adds his voice to the other nobles' who succeed in arresting Gloucester for treason.

He does not appear again until IV.iv when he persuades the king to retreat to safety at Killingworth in face of Cade's advance. He is responsible for persuading Cade's supporters to desert to the king's side (in IV.viii), and follows this by meeting York, newly returned from Ireland and with an army at his back. He tells York, wrongly it turns out, that the king has placed Somerset in the Tower of London (York's stipulation if he is to disband his army). He recommends in V.i. that Alexander Iden be knighted for killing Cade, and is last invoked by the king (V.i. 192) as one of his few remaining supporters. Overall, Buckingham is ambitious (I.i.202), and is used by Shakespeare to emphasize one of the crucial elements in the early part of the plot: the downfall of Gloucester. After that is accomplished, Buckingham's role decreases in importance.

Cade (Jack Cade, also known as John Cade):

Cade's extraordinary attempt to overthrow the king occupies almost all of the action in Act IV, and he even makes an appearance (at least his head does!) in V.i.63. He is first referred to by York in a soliloquy (III.i.348-81). York has "seduc'd" (that is, incited) John Cade to cause civil unrest while York is away in Ireland. Cade will pretend to be John Mortimer, a claimant to the throne through Lionel, duke of Clarence (the third son of Edward III). York praises Cade for his physical strength, his courage, and his ability to withstand torture.

Before Cade makes his first appearance, then, he is depicted as tough; York, however, makes it clear that he is also "headstrong" and a "rascal" (III.i.356, 381). Throughout Cade's many appearances in Act IV, Shakespeare develops these two sides of Cade and adds a third: his radical social message. Cade's first entrance (IV.ii.31) is preceded by a discussion between two of his followers that emphasizes Cade's revolutionary ideas (IV.ii.4-6). His concern for creating a system based on strict equality and a fair price for food is, however, expressed in the context of a humorous dialogue about his origins. He insists he is of royal blood (a Mortimer); his followers comment on the humbleness of his background and his conviction for sheep stealing. Worse, his belief in equality is undermined by his insistence on becoming a king. Everyone will be equal except Jack Cade. He even begins his quest for kingship in a comical way, by knighting himself as Sir John Mortimer (IV.ii.119-21) in order to better fight Sir Humphrey Stafford, his brother William, and their forces. Yet, there is no denying how radical Cade's message is: he intends the death of all the educated and the rich (IV.iv.36-37). Cade is also a murderously violent man. His first goal is to murder all the lawyers (IV.ii.76-78); his first murder is actually of a clerk whose only crime is being able to write. His next victims are the Staffords, whom he drags behind his horse to London. Then he has a soldier killed simply for calling him Jack Cade (IV.vi.8-10). After that, it's the turn of Lord Say and Sir James Cromer. Lord Say is killed for pleading so eloquently for his life. Cromer is killed merely because he is a relative of Say's. Then both victims have their heads mounted on poles so that Cade can have them kiss in a humiliating way.

After Buckingham and old Clifford manage to separate Cade from his followers by promising the latter pardons and by appealing to their patriotic hatred of the French, Cade runs off, and after five days without food is caught stealing vegetables from a garden. The landowner, Alexander Iden, kills him because Cade insists on fighting. Even as he is dying, Cade has delusions of his own importance and prowess, for he asserts that he is Kent's "best man" (IV.x.73) and would not have been defeated had he not been weak from starvation.

It is important to reflect on what Shakespeare may have intended by his tremendously vivid depiction of Cade and his "rabblement" (IV.viii.l). First, he may have meant to show the social dangers of weak government embodied in a diffident king and fractious nobles. Second, he may have meant the audience to compare Cade's tactics and behavior with those of so many of the nobles (Suffolk, Somerset, York, Buckingham, and others). Third, he may have meant to undermine Cade's radical social message by having ideas of social equality come from the mouth of someone so disturbed.

Cardinal Beauford (Cardinal Beauford, Bishop of Winchester):

See Beauford

Citizens:

Two or three citizens appear in IV.v. One of them provides information to Lord Scales about the progress of Cade and the rebels.

Clerk (of Chartam):

Named Emmanuel, he appears in IV.ii.85-110. He is taken away to be hanged on Cade's orders because he can write his name. Shakespeare uses him to symbolize Cade's hatred of the educated.

Clifford (Lord Clifford):

He accompanies Buckingham in IV.viii when they successfully appeal to Cade's followers to stop their rebellion. He reappears in IV.ix, again in the company of Buckingham, to announce to the king the surrender of Cade's followers. In V.i he is the most obviously loyal of the king's subjects. In V.ii at the battle of Saint Albons he is killed by York but memorialized by his son, young Clifford, in a powerful speech promising vengeance.

Clifford (Young Clifford):

The son of old Clifford (who is also known as Lord Clifford), young Clifford enters with his father at V.i.122 in support of the king and against York, York's sons (Edward and Richard), Warwick, and Salisbury. At the battle of Saint Albons he delivers a moving lament over his dead father's body (V.ii.40-60) and dedicates himself to avenging him by killing York's children. His final speech in the play (V.ii.84-90) exhorts the king, with the battle lost, to flee to London.

Commons:

Commoners appear in III.ii to protest the murder of Gloucester. Through the earl of Salisbury, they call for the execution or banishment of Suffolk whom they blame for Gloucester's death. Their role is to show the common people's love of Gloucester and concern for the safety of the king.

Dick:

From Ashford and by profession a butcher, he is one of Cade's followers. He first appears in IV.ii and in a series of asides makes fun of Cade's assertion that he is of royal blood. (An aside is a comment made by a character which is meant to be heard only by the audience and not by anyone on stage.) He wants all lawyers killed (IV.ii.76-

77). For his prowess in the fight against the Staffords, Cade rewards him with a licence to butcher animals during Lent.

Duchess of Gloucester:

See Eleanor

Edward (son of Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York):

One of two of the four sons of York mentioned in *Henry VI, Part Two,* he appears in V.i to support his father's claim to the throne.

Eleanor (Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester):

She is the wife of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, Lord Protector. She has ambitions for her husband and herself and dreams of being queen (I.ii.35-40). She uses witches (Jordan and Bolingbrook) to try to help her see the future, but her plans are betrayed by Hume, paid by her to organize the event. She is arrested in I.iv by York and Buckingham and banished for life by the king to the Isle of Man (II.iii.9-13). In her final appearance (II.iv.17-110), she says farewell to her husband and sorrowfully goes into exile on the Isle of Man.

Falconers:

These appear in II.i at the king's waterfowl hunt. They have non-speaking roles.

Gentlemen:

In IV.i. two gentlemen are captured by pirates. Both are ransomed for 2000 crowns. One remains on stage at the end of the scene in order to bear Suffolk's body to the king.

Gloucester (Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester):

Lord Protector to the king, he is loved by the common people (III.ii.248). Although he is heir to the throne and has an ambitious wife, he appears to have no desire to be king. Because of his power and position, he is the focus of the schemes of the other nobles. They see him as the main obstacle in the way of fulfilling their own ambitions.

In Li Gloucester criticizes the peace with France and the king's marriage to a penniless Margaret. He tries in I.ii to dissuade his wife from treacherously seeking to overthrow the king. In I.iii. 118-37 he defends himself against the queen's, Suffolk's, Somerset's and Winchester's efforts to strip him of his Lord Protectorship. When Simpcox pretends to have had his sight miraculously restored in II.i, Gloucester exposes him as a fraud even though the king embraces his deception. In Il.iii, Gloucester is grief stricken at his wife's treachery towards the king, but makes no effort to intervene on her behalf. The king strips him of his Lord Protectorship, which he accepts willingly. In II.iv he movingly bids farewell to his wife as she goes off to banishment. In Ill.i Gloucester appears in Parliament and is arrested by Suffolk for treason. This comes after a sustained effort by the queen, Buckingham, Suffolk, Winchester, and York to convince the king that he is guilty of a host of crimes. He is taken away even though the king still believes him to be loyal. Gloucester is murdered in III.ii on the orders of Suffolk and Winchester.

Gloucester is depicted as the ideal courtier: honest; outspoken; loyal; loved by the people. There is no truth to the attacks of his enemies, yet those attacks finally bring him down and cause his death. Through Gloucester, Shakespeare seems to be making the point that the court of Henry VI has become so corrupt that not even loyalty and honesty offer protection for men of power. Additionally, the downfall of Gloucester serves as a means of unifying the action in the first three Acts of the play.

Goffe (Matthew Goffe):

He is sent by Lord Scales in IV.v to Smithfield to try to stop Cade's attack on London. In IV.vii he is slain along with all his men. He has a nonspeaking part.

Guards:

Guards accompany Buckingham and York in I.iv as they break in upon the duchess of Gloucester who is practicing witchcraft in an effort to predict future events. They take the duchess and her accomplices prisoner.

Henry (King Henry VI of England):

Henry is' depicted as weak, indecisive, and unable to keep his fractious nobles at peace with each other. He is highly religious and rather bookish, and seems ill-suited to a role in which decisions have to be made. Reluctance perhaps best characterizes his role.

He begins the play by welcoming his new bride, Margaret, and by confirming the peace with France. Both acts attest to Henry's foolishness: firstly, his love for Margaret appears to be based only on her beauty; secondly, the peace with France leads to a significant loss of English lands in France. In his next appearance, Henry is unable to decide whether York or Somerset should be his regent in France because he really doesn't care ("all's one to me" [I.iii.102]). So, he simply stands by while his wife and assembled nobles argue among themselves. In the end, he has Gloucester decide the matter (I.iii.203-10). Then, in II.i when Winchester and Gloucester wrangle with each other over power the king says that he hopes he can settle their argument, but he does nothing at all to achieve this aim. When Simpcox enters pretending that his blindness has been cured by Saint Albon, the king gullibly believes him (I.iii.82). It is Gloucester again who comes to the king's aid by exposing Simpcox as a fraud. In II.iii the king makes a good judgment by banishing the duchess of Gloucester, who is indeed plotting against him, but a poor one when he strips Gloucester of his Lord Protectorship. It is fairly clear that in doing so he has listened to the false charges against Gloucester raised by several nobles and the queen.

Perhaps the king sinks lowest when in Ill.i he allows Gloucester to be arrested for treason by Suffolk and taken away to prison even though he himself believes Gloucester to be loyal and his queen and many of the nobles to be seeking Gloucester's life (III.i.207-08). 'Characteristically, Henry refuses to act, and instead gives authority over to the nobles: "My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best, / Do or undo, as if ourself were here" (Ill.i. 195-96). He does finally act, it is true, by banishing Suffolk for Gloucester's murder (III.ii.295-97). That, however, comes much too late; the damage has been done. It is this failure to assume his responsibility as monarch that indirectly leads to the Cade rebellion.

It is an indication of the king's failure to assert his authority that he scarcely appears after Ill.ii. Almost the whole of Act IV belongs to Cade, and the king appears only twice: once in retreat to Killingworth (IV.iv), and once merely acceding to York's demand that Somerset be imprisoned (IV.ix). However, even in this latter act the king fails, for though he does send Somerset to be imprisoned in the Tower of London, Somerset reappears in V.i accompanied by the queen and very much a free man. The king is unable, also, to stop his nobles from choosing sides in his dispute with York and beginning a civil war. The final image the audience gets of the king (V.ii.72-90) is of someone unable to make a decision even when it comes to saving his own life. His wife and young Clifford have to persuade him to flee back to London from defeat at the battle of Saint Albons.

Yet, paradoxically, there is much to admire in the king. He is a very godly man who is singularly lacking in self-interest. He piously refuses to blame Winchester for his crimes (III.iii.31), is genuinely distraught at Gloucester's death (III.ii. 141-45), and properly criticizes Salisbury for changing sides after swearing an oath of loyalty to him (V.i.179, 181). He even has enough self-knowledge to realize that he is an ineffective king (IV.ix.48-49). He is someone who lives in a profoundly evil world but believes passionately in purity of soul (III.ii.232- 35). Sadly, he is someone who never wanted to be king though he has known no other life (IV.ix.3-6).

Herald

He appears at II.iv.70-71 to summon Gloucester to a meeting of Parliament at Bury.

Holland (John Holland):

He is one of Cade's followers who, in conversation with George Bevis, criticizes the aristocracy (IV.ii.1-30). His next and last appearance is in IV.vii where he makes fun in a couple of asides of Cade's intention to dissolve parliament and run the country.

Horner (Thomas Horner):

He is an armorer who is accused by his apprentice, Peter Thump, of saying that York was the rightful heir to the throne (I.iii.25-36). He and his accuser appear before the king (I.iii.177-220), and Gloucester sentences them to trial by combat. The combat takes place at II.iii.59-105. Horner is killed by his apprentice and confesses his treason with his dying breath (II.iii.94). The dispute between Horner and Peter Thump is meant to parallel the disputes among the nobles over the same issue. It shows how deep is the schism within the kingdom over who is the rightful king.

Hume (Sir John Hume):

A priest, he is paid by the duchess of Gloucester to arrange for Jordan and Bolingbrook to raise a spirit to foretell the future. He has, however, also been paid by Winchester and Suffolk to entrap the duchess (I.ii.68-107). This raising of a spirit takes place in I.iv, and Hume along with the others is arrested. He is brought before the king and sentenced to death by hanging (II.iii.5-8).

Humphrey (Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester):

See Gloucester

Iden (Alexander Iden):

He is the landowner (or esquire) from Kent who, in IV.x, surprises Cade as he is stealing vegetables from his garden. They fight, and Iden kills Cade. He carries Cade's head to the king (V.i.64-82), and is rewarded with a knighthood and 1000 marks.

Jordan (Margery Jordan):

She is described as a "cunning witch" (I.ii.75), and is responsible along with Hume, Bolingbrook, and Southwell for raising the spirit in I.iv who answers the duchess of Gloucester's questions about the king, Suffolk, and Somerset. She is arrested by Buckingham and York, and is sentenced by the king to be burned at the stake for witchcraft (II.iii.7).

Ladies:

These appear in the court scenes to increase their regality. They are mentioned in the character list at the beginning of the play but are not specifically referred to in the stage directions.

Lieutenant:

He is the leader of the pirates (in IV.i) who capture Suffolk as he is on his way to exile in France. He orders Suffolk's execution, and in a long speech (IV.i.70-103) criticizes Suffolk for committing adultery with the queen, losing France, causing the other nobles to rebel, reawakening York's claim to the throne, and creating rebellion in Kent.

Lords:

These appear in the court scenes to increase their regality. They are mentioned in the character list at the beginning of the play but are not specifically referred to in the stage directions.

Margaret (Queen Margaret):

Margaret, wife of Henry VI, is remarkable for her beauty and eloquence (I.i.32-33). She is motivated by two impulses: an ambition to work her will through the king, and her love for the duke of Suffolk. Queen Margaret conspires with Suffolk, Winchester, and others to overthrow the duchess of Gloucester (whom she sees as a rival) and Gloucester himself. She is the first (at III.i.223-34) to suggest that Gloucester should be murdered. She is a convincing liar (as at III.ii.56-71 when she pretends to lament Gloucester's death) and an effective manipulator (as when she turns the king's sorrow at Gloucester's death into a lament for the king's lack of love for her [III.ii.73-121]). With Gloucester dead, she turns to her second impulse (her love of Suffolk) to guide her, for Suffolk is accused by the common people and by Warwick of murdering Gloucester. Here, her efforts fail, for Suffolk is banished by the king despite her eloquence in his defense. Now the queen is at her most sympathetic, for her parting with Suffolk seems heartfelt (III.ii.300-66) as does her grief when the head of Suffolk is brought in IV.iv. After the death of Suffolk, the queen virtually disappears from the play. She surfaces to challenge York's claim to the throne by refusing to accede to his demand that Somerset be imprisoned (V.i.85-86) and at the end steels the hesitating king to fly rather than wait to be captured (V.ii.74-77).

Master's Mate:

In IV.i he intends to ransom one of the gentlemen captured by the pirates for 1000 crowns (IV.i.17).

Mayor (of Saint Albons):

In II.i he brings in Simpcox and his wife to be presented to the king. He also summons the beadle, whose whip shows Simpcox to be a charlatan.

Messengers:

Messengers relay information between the various groups of characters within the play. Also known as "posts," they have most impact in relaying information about the Irish rebellion (III.I; IV.ix) and in showing how rapidly Cade's rebellion develops (IV.iv).

Michael:

One of Cade's men, he enters at IV.ii.110 to announce that Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother with their forces have arrived to oppose Cade. He advises Cade to flee.

Murderers:

In III.ii, they enter after having murdered Gloucester. They point out how pious Gloucester was and tell Suffolk that they did commit the act in such a way that it could look like a natural death.

Neighbors:

In II.iii.59-65 neighbors appear in support of Thomas Horner, who is defending himself in trial by combat against a charge of treason made by his apprentice, Peter Thump. They are drunk and make Horner drunk, too.

Officers:

In II.iv, officers accompany the duchess of Gloucester as she does her three days of open penance (II.iii.11) before being banished to the Isle of Man.

Old Clifford:

See Clifford

Petitioners:

In I.iii three or four of these wait to present their petitions to Gloucester as Lord Protector. By mistake, they present their petitions to Suffolk and the queen, who rudely dismiss them. Their petitions seek redress against wrongful acts by one of Winchester's men and by Suffolk. Their treatment contrasts with that they would have received from the Lord Protector. One of the petitioners is Peter Thump, whose petition against Thomas Horner is taken up again in II.iii.

Plantagenet (Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York):

He is a remarkable character in this play for he is the only one to be given soliloquies: two lengthy ones (at I.i.214-59 and III.i.331-383) and one short one (at V.i.1-11). (A soliloquy is a speech given by a character alone on stage directly to the audience in which the character's innermost thoughts are revealed.) York seems to have only one purpose in life: to successfully assert his right to the throne. In the first soliloquy he reveals that he will use the power of Salisbury and Warwick and pretend friendship to Gloucester in order to put himself in a position to gain the crown. In his second soliloquy he reveals his plans: to use his expedition to quell the Irish rebels as a means to wrest the crown from the king. To this end, he has incited Cade to lead a workers' rebellion against the king. In the third, he reveals his intent, having returned from Ireland, to seize the crown from Henry VI. He defeats the king at the battle of Saint Albons (V.ii-iii).

Post:

See Messengers

Prentices:

Named Robin, Will, and Tom, they appear in support of the apprentice Peter Thump in II.iii. They drink to Thump's success in trial by combat against Horner.

Queen Margaret:

See Margaret

Richard (son of Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York):

The future Richard III, he enters at V.i.121 accompanied by his brother, Edward. They come on stage in support of their father, the duke of York, and his claim to the throne. In the battle of Saint Albons, Richard kills Somerset (V.ii.66-71).

Salisbury (Earl of Salisbury):

He is the father of the earl of Warwick. As the Neviles, they form one of the most powerful families in England (I.iii.72-74). In II.ii, Salisbury and Warwick support York's claim to the throne (9-52, 63). Before that crucial event, Salisbury is intent on trying to save Gloucester from the machinations of the queen, Buckingham, Suffolk, Somerset, and Winchester. After that he makes a very powerful enemy of the king.

Despite his power, Salisbury's role in the play is relatively small. He unsuccessfully supports York for the position of regent of France (I.i. 194-98). He acts as the mouthpiece for the common people when they call for the banishment or execution of Suffolk for the murder of Gloucester. He (in company with his son, Warwick) goes over publicly to York's side in V.i. He ends the play victorious at the battle of Saint Albons.

Sawyer:

He is a follower of Cade's mentioned in the stage direction at IV.ii.30. His is a non-speaking role.

Say (Lord Say):

He is accused by Dick and Cade (IV.ii. 160-73) of selling the dukedom of Maine and, so, "geld[ing] the commonwealth" (IV.ii.165). For this, they intend to execute him. He appears in IV.iv, where the king advises him to retreat with the royal party to Killingworth because of the hatred that the rebels bear towards him (IV.ii. 19, 43-44). He, however, decides instead to go into hiding in London. Cade's men capture him in IV.vii, and he is executed along with his son-in-law, Sir James Cromer.

Scales (Lord Scales):

In IV. v he is the defender of the Tower of London against Cade. He sends a force led by Matthew Goffe to Smithfield in order to defend the city against the rebels.

Sheriff:

In II.iv, he commands the officers guarding the duchess of Gloucester as she does her three days of open penance (II.iii. 11) before being banished to the Isle of Man.

Shipmaster:

In IV.i he intends to ransom one of the gentlemen captured by the pirates for 1000 crowns (IV.i. 16).

Simpcox:

Supposedly unable to walk and blind since birth, he appears in Fl.i accompanied by his wife, the mayor of Saint Albons, and aldermen. He pretends that Saint Albon has cured his blindness, and is presented to the king. The king believes his pretence, but Gloucester demonstrates that he is a fraud and was never blind. In addition, a beadle with a whip demonstrates that he is not lame either, for he manages to run away (II.i.150).

Smith:

A weaver by trade, he is one of Cade's men. He first appears at IV.ii.30 and on three or four occasions in the next few scenes provides commentary on Cade's absurdities and excesses.

Soldiers:

These appear in numerous scenes beginning with Cade's rebellion, continuing with York's return from Ireland, and climaxing in the battle of Saint Albons with which the play ends. The most memorable soldier is the one who appears at IV.vi.6 and makes the mistake of calling on Cade by his real rather than his assumed name (John Mortimer). For this, Cade has his men kill him.

Somerset (Duke of Somerset):

At the beginning of the play, he sides with Buckingham against Winchester (I.i. 172-77). Next, he lines up with several nobles against Gloucester (in I.iii). He, rather than York, is appointed regent of France by Gloucester at I.iii.205-06, and he returns to the action at III.i.82 having lost all the French lands. He is passed over to go to Ireland to quell the rebels there, and instead York is chosen (III.i.309). The king subsequently sentences him to imprisonment at the request of York who has returned from Ireland with an army (IV.ix.38-40). The queen, however, ignores the sentence and is seen by York accompanied by Somerset. Somerset's appearance causes York to assert his claim to the throne, and in retaliation Somerset arrests York for treason. The action degenerates into outright war, and in the battle of Saint Albons that follows Somerset is killed by Richard, son of the duke of York (V.ii.66-69).

Southwell (John Southwell):

He is a priest who, in I.iv, takes pan in the duchess of Gloucester's raising of a spirit. York and Buckingham arrest him along with the others at the ritual. In II.iii.5-8, the king sentences him to be hanged.

Spirit:

Named Asmath, at the duchess of Gloucester's behest the spirit is summoned by Hume, Southwell, Bolingbrook, and Jordan in I.iv. It prophesies what will happen to the king, Suffolk, and Somerset (I.iv.24-40). Its prophecies prove true.

Stafford (Sir Humphrey Stafford):

He is the captain of the guard in I.iv that arrest those who summoned up the spirit at the behest of the duchess of Gloucester. He enters again in IV.ii along with his brother to stop Cade's rebellion. The two sides fight in IV.iii at Blackheath, and he and his brother are killed. Cade puts on Stafford's armor, and the brothers' bodies are dragged behind Cade's horse as the rebels march on London.

Stafford (William Stafford):

He is the brother of Sir Humphrey Stafford. Along with his brother, he enters in IV.ii to stop Cade's rebellion. The two sides fight in IV.iii at Blackheath, and he and his brother are killed. Their bodies are dragged behind Cade's horse as the rebels march on London.

Stanley (Sir John Stanley):

In II.iv, he accompanies the sheriff and his officers guarding the duchess of Gloucester as she does her three days of open penance (II.iii.11) before being banished to the Isle of Man. He is appointed by the king (II.iii.12-13) to protect the duchess during her banishment. He treats the duchess with sympathy (II.iv.94-95, 98-99, 105-06).

Suffolk (Duke of Suffolk):

The lover of Margaret, daughter of the duke of Anjou, he brings her back to England to marry King Henry and become queen at the beginning *of Henry VI, Part Two.* He also brings back the peace treaty with France, a treaty which displeases the nobility because it gives away part of France in payment for the king's bride and because Suffolk gets a fifteen percent commission for his efforts (I.i. 133-34). As he announced at the end of *Henry VI, Part One* Suffolk's intent is to rule the kingdom through Margaret, and in *Henry VI, Part Two* he does his best to do so. He ensnares the ambitious duchess of York in witchcraft and treason and, so, manages to get her banished and as a result her husband stripped of his Lord Protectorship. He arrests Gloucester for high treason (III.i.97) and then schemes to have him murdered (III.i.257-65; III.ii.6, 8-12). His plan backfires, however, and the king banishes him despite the queen's attempts to intercede in his favor. On the way to banishment in France, he is intercepted by pirates and executed.

Thump (Peter Thump):

He is an apprentice to Thomas Horner, the armorer. He accuses his master of saying that York is the rightful heir to the throne (I.iii.25-36). He and Horner appear before the king (I.iii. 177-220), and Gloucester sentences them to trial by combat. The combat takes place at II.iii.59-105. Thump unexpectedly kills Horner, who is drunk, but not before he confesses his treason with his dying breath (II.iii.94). The dispute between Thump and Horner is meant to parallel the disputes among the nobles over the same issue. It shows how deep is the schism within the kingdom over who is the rightful king.

Vaux:

He enters at III.ii.366 on his way to tell the king that Winchester (Cardinal Beauford) is on his deathbed and that his soul is troubled by Gloucester's ghost.

Warwick (Earl of Warwick):

He is the son of the earl of Salisbury and comes from the powerful Nevile family. He is a more hotheaded version of his father. He bemoans the loss of the French provinces of Maine and Anjou as a result of the king's marriage to Margaret (I.i.l 16-22,209-13); he strongly asserts York's claim to be regent in France (I.iii. 107-08); and he criticizes Somerset for losing France (I.iii. 173-74).

His vital role in the play begins, however, with his acceptance of York's claim to the throne (II.ii). From then on, he is York's staunchest ally. It is he who proves that Suffolk and Winchester plotted Gloucester's death (Ill.ii. 149-241); it is he who castigates Winchester for a "monstrous life" (III.iii.30). And when York asserts his claim to the throne in V.i, it is Warwick who is the first not of York's blood to come out in support of him. The play ends after the victorious battle of Saint Albons with Warwick urging on York and Salisbury to get to London before the fleeing king and queen do.

Whitmore (Walter Whitmore):

In IV.i the lieutenant of the pirates gives Suffolk to Whitmore as his prisoner. Whitmore is intent on killing rather than ransoming Suffolk because he lost an eye in capturing Suffolk's ship. He takes him offstage at line 138 to execute him.

Wife (of Simpcox):

In II.i she supports her husband's fraudulent claim that Saint Albon cured him of his blindness. When he is exposed as a fraud, she explains to Gloucester why they fabricated the deception: "Alas, sir, we did it for pure need" (II.i.154).

Winchester (Cardinal Beauford, Bishop of Winchester):

See Beauford

York (Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York):

See Plantagenet

Young Clifford:

See Clifford

Further Study

Baker, Herschel. Introduction to *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2,* and *3,*by William Shakespeare. In the *Riverside Shakespeare,* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, 587-95. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.

Baker points out the degree to which events in the first part of the trilogy play themselves out in the next two. He finds *Henry VI, Part Two* "much more soundly built" than *Henry VI, Part One.*

Bevington, David. Introduction to *The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth,* by William Shakespeare. In *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* edited by David Bevington, 538-40. Updated 4th ed. New York: Longman, 1997.

Bevington focuses on the play's "integrity of theme and dramatic form."

Cairncross, Andrew S. Introduction to *The Second Part of King Henry VI,* by William Shakespeare, edited by Andrew S. Cairncross, xi-liv. The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. London: Methuen & Co., 1969.

Cairncross discusses the ways in which Shakespeare brings organization to a complex, rather disorganized story that he inherited from his chroniclers, Holinshed and Hall.

Calderwood, James L. "Shakespeare's Evolving Imagery: 2 *Henry VI." English Studies* 48 (1967): 481-93.

Calderwood traces an improvement in Shakespeare's imagery in 2 *Henry VI* from the rhetorical and static to the revelatory and active. He focuses on four image strands in particular.

Carr, William M. "Animal Imagery in 2 *Henry VI." English Studies* 53 (October 1972): 408-12.

Carr sees animal imagery as reinforcing the play's themes of predator, prey, and protector.

Evans, B. Ifor. "The Early Histories." In *The Language of Shakespeare's Plays,* by B. Ifor Evans, 31-44. London: Methuen, 1952.

Evans sees Shakespeare's use of language in *Henry VI, Part Two* as stronger than in *Henry VI, Part One.*

Friend, E. M., Jr. "The First Thing We'll Do, Let's Kill All the Lawyers.'" *Alabama* Lawyer 44 (September 1983): 276-77.

Friend argues that Dick's comment in IV.ii *of Henry VI, Part Two* is an ironic indication of the centrality of lawyers to the maintenance of order in society.

Manheim, Michael. "Silence in the *Henry VI* Plays." *Educational Theatre Journal* 29 (March 1977): 70-76.

Manheim analyzes III.ii of *Henry VI, Part Two* to buttress his argument that Henry VI's silence makes him morally superior to the other major characters in the play.

Price, Hereward T. *Construction in Shakespeare.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1951.

Argues that Shakespeare carefully ties all causes of discord to a weak ruler.

Riggs, David. "The Hero in History: 2 *Henry VI."* In Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and Its Literary Tradition, by David Riggs, 113-27. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Riggs argues for *Henry VI, Part Two* being the best part of the trilogy because of the variety of its action and because of its consistency.

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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.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- 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.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- 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.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- 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.

Other Features

SfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Shakespeare for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Shakespeare for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SfS, the following form may be used:

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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