King John Study Guide

King John by William Shakespeare

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Many elements of the struggle for political power in thirteenth-century England are universal. They can be found in the history of every country in the world. Shifting alliances within factions and political backstabbing—as when Philip and Lewis desert Arthur's cause in exchange for Blanch's dowry, or when the English nobles desert John and then rush back to him upon learning that Lewis means to kill them—are not uncommon in many nations, even today. The cynicism about national leaders expressed by the Bastard in his second major soliloquy (II.i.561-98) resembles the alienation from politics felt by many people in modern times. And when the Bastard describes the weakened John as a bold leader, a "gallant monarch," and a fierce warrior (V.ii.127-58 and 173-78), his words recall those of a political image maker, trying to present a candidate in the most favorable light.

On the international level, the historical enmity between England and France depicted in *King John* has many counterparts in contemporary times: in Central Europe, the Mideast, and Southeast Asia, for example. To outside observers, some nations' justifications for declaring war are no more valid than, for instance, the reasons that Pandulph gives to induce Lewis to invade England. And regardless of changes in battlefield technology—from arrows to anti-ballistic missiles, from horses to tanks—the victims of war have always included foot soldiers, widows, and orphans. This is pointed out by several characters, especially in Act II; see II.i.41-3, 210-21, 258-66, 300-11, and 352-60.

A central issue in *King John* is the importance of values in motivating human action. How does a person with deeply held principles react when an unethical course of action would serve his or her self-interest? To what extent should loyalty—to a principle, an individual, a political faction, or a religious belief—determine one's behavior? In the play, rumors of Arthur's death inflame the people against John. Many ordinary citizens are reported to have put up little resistance to the French invasion; some have even welcomed Lewis and his foreign army (V.i.30-35). Are there circumstances in which rebellion against authority can be justified? The Bastard presents the issue of rebelling against "the system" or accommodating oneself to it in his soliloquy on commodity (II.i.561-98). In the course of the play, he goes through a process of "selling out," relinquishing family honor for personal gain; yet when his country is in extreme danger, he is the champion of national unity and England's most passionate patriot. Can moral or political expediency serve a noble or virtuous cause? In *King John,* the distinction between good and evil is not always clear, and choosing the most ethical course of action is no easy matter.

The question of church-state relations takes a different form today than in the thirteenth century, though it is still a relevant issue. In America, for example, there is no official, established church, as there was in many European countries six or seven centuries ago. Yet today there is active debate about what role, if any, organized religions and members of different religious faiths should have in shaping government policies. Cardinal Pandulph appears to have a mixture of motives for his actions, and he is one

of the play's most effective manipulators of words. Are late twentieth-century religious leaders always ethical in their conduct, or are some as manipulative or unethical as Pandulph?

One other contemporary issue presented in the play is the role of women in society. In *King John* the female characters□from Elinor the power broker to Blanch the pawn□disappear after Act III. What does this signify, if anything? From time to time, the female characters use deceit (Lady Faulconbridge), manipulation (Queen Elinor), and emotional appeals (Constance). In the thirteenth century, women were denied the independent exercise of power; they had to resort to indirect means to achieve their goals. To what extent is this different today?

Twentieth-century productions of *King John* have frequently focused on the play's topicality and relevance to modern audiences. It raises issues that are not limited to thirteenth-century England but echo throughout human history, and will likely continue to confront us forever.

Plot Summary

Act I

The play opens at the English court of King John. Chatillion, an emissary from King Philip of France, declares that Philip claims the English crown and all its territories in the name of Arthur, King John's nephew. John vows that he will sail to France immediately to wage war against Philip. Robert Faulconbridge and Philip the Bastard enter, and present competing claims to the late Sir Robert's Faulconbridge's land and fortune. Robert argues that his father was overseas on a mission and the late King Richard was staying at the Faulconbridge estate when Philip was conceived; he notes that on his deathbed, Sir Robert denied that Philip was his son. Elinor, King John's mother, asks the Bastard if he will forsake his claim to the Faulconbridge inheritance, and he readily agrees. John officially declares Philip the Bastard to be Richard's son. Left alone, the Bastard soliloquizes about honor, flattery, and his new circumstances. Lady Faulconbridge appears, and when the Bastard asks her to tell him who his father was, she admits that it was King Richard, not Sir Robert Faulconbridge.

Act II

Outside the French city of Angiers, King Philip has assembled his noblemen and allies. King John arrives with his followers, and the two monarchs formally exchange rival claims about who has the more valid right to the English throne: John or Arthur. Elinor and Constance, Arthur's mother, hurl insults at each other, while the Bastard vows to give the duke of Austria a thrashing. A citizen of Angiers suddenly appears on the city walls above them. John and Philip each demand to be admitted to the city. The citizen replies that since Angiers is an English possession, its gates will open only to the rightful king of England□whoever that is proven to be. The French and English armies engage in battle, with neither side gaining the upper hand. The two kings and their attendants meet near the city walls, and the Bastard points out that the citizens of Angiers have treated them both with contempt. He suggests that they turn their weapons against the city and destroy it. The citizen suggests another solution: that John's niece Blanch become the wife of Philip's son Lewis. John promises to turn over all his French provinces and a huge sum of money as well if the marriage takes place. Lewis and Philip agree to the match. Blanch says she will do whatever is asked of her. Alone after everyone else leaves, the Bastard expresses his astonishment over the turn of events, marveling that self-interest has led the French to abandon a just and honorable course of action.

Act III

At the French encampment outside Angiers, Constance rages at the news of the alliance between France and England. When John and Philip appear with their

followers, she turns on Philip, accusing him of perjury. Cardinal Pandulph arrives and demands to know why John has blocked the pope's appointment of a new archbishop of Canterbury. John tells him that the king, not the pope, rules England. Pandulph declares that John is a heretic and no longer a member of the church, adding that whoever revolts from John's rule will be blessed and whoever takes his life will be doing a good deed. The cardinal further orders Philip to break off his new alliance with John or be barred from the church. Philip hesitates, but after Pandulph presents a complex argument about Philip's primary role as defender of the church, the French king renounces the alliance. Combat resumes between England and France, and Arthur is taken prisoner. While the battle rages, John approaches Hubert, a follower he has named to look after Arthur. By degrees, he reveals to Hubert that he wants the boy killed, and Hubert agrees to do it. With the English clearly victorious, Pandulph, Lewis, and Philip meet. They are confronted by Constance, grief-stricken over the loss of her son. When she leaves, Philip follows her. The cardinal then points out to Lewis that because Arthur represents a threat to John's title, it is inevitable that John will have him killed□leaving Lewis a clear way to the English throne, through his marriage to Blanch. Lewis agrees to Pandulph's proposal to invade England.

Act IV

In an English prison, Hubert shows Arthur a document ordering that the young prince be blinded. Arthur pleads with Hubert not to carry out the order, and at last Hubert relents. The setting shifts to the palace of King John, who has just been crowned a second time. When the assembled nobles request the release of Arthur, the king agrees. Hubert arrives and whispers in John's ear. The king turns to the nobles and tells them that Arthur has died that night. Pembroke and Salisbury declare that there must have been foul play. After they depart, a messenger arrives, announcing that French forces have landed in England. The Bastard enters with a man who has predicted that on the next Ascension Day, John will give up his crown. Dispatching the man to prison and the Bastard to bring back the nobles, John tells Hubert he never meant to have Arthur killed. When Hubert shows him the warrant he had signed, John blames Hubert for carrying out his orders. Hubert then reveals that Arthur is still alive. The scene shifts to the prison walls, where Arthur intends to elude discovery by leaping down and running away. He plummets onto the stones below and dies. Pembroke, Salisbury, and Bigot appear nearby. They are soon joined by the Bastard, who tries to convince them to return to the palace. They discover Arthur's body, and the nobles insist he must have been murdered. When Hubert appears, the nobles accuse him of killing Arthur, but he denies it. After they leave, the Bastard demands to know if Hubert is guilty. He denies it again, and the Bastard tells him to bear away Arthur's body.

Act V

In a room at the English palace, John hands his crown to Pandulph, who places it on the king's head and declares that John's sovereign authority comes from the pope. The king, in turn, urges the cardinal to keep his part of their bargain and halt the French

invasion. When Pandulph remarks that it is Ascension Day, John realizes that the prophecy has come true. The Bastard enters and tells the king that several English cities have welcomed the French invader, that many nobles have gone over to Lewis's side, and that Arthur is dead. Yet he urges John to remain steadfast. The king puts him in charge of marshalling the English forces against the invasion. In the French encampment, Lewis and Count Melune confer with the English noblemen who have become their allies. Pandulph arrives and tells Lewis that hostilities should cease. The Bastard appears, learns that Lewis means to fight on, and then delivers a rousing speech in which he portrays King John as determined to carry on the war and defeat the French. On the field of battle, however, John complains of a fever, and when a messenger comes from the Bastard telling him to retire from the field, he assents. The messenger also brings word that ships sent to re-supply the French troops have run aground. In another part of the field, the fatally wounded Melune tells Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot that they have been betrayed: Lewis has sworn to cut off their heads that night. Salisbury proposes to the other English nobles that they return to King John and ask him to pardon them. Subsequently, in an orchard at Swinstead Abbey, Prince Henry, Salisbury, and Bigot wait to hear news of John, who has been poisoned by a monk. The king is carried into the orchard, desperately ill and consumed by fever. The Bastard arrives with Hubert, bringing dire news about the course of the war. The king dies as they are speaking. Salisbury counters the Bastard's account with an entirely different report: Pandulph has come to Swinstead Abbey from Lewis, seeking peace and apparently agreeable to any terms the English set. Everyone kneels in loyalty to Henry, the dead king's heir, and the Bastard closes the play with a stirring appeal to the principles of patriotism.

Characters

Arthur (Arthur, Duke of Britain):

He is the son of Constance and Geffrey, King John's older brother. According to the law of primogeniture, or birth order, Arthur ought to have become king of England when Richard I died. Arthur is generally presented as a helpless young child, yet sometimes he shows adult-like bravery and composure. At the opening of II.i, he greets the duke of Austria and graciously thanks him for joining the ranks of his supporters. Later in the scene, however, his poise deserts him in the face of the spiteful wrangling between Constance and Elinor, and he seems overwhelmed by the political turmoil swirling around him. When Constance learns that the marriage of Blanch and Lewis has brought peace between England and France, the depth of her outrage frightens Arthur, and he begs her to accept the situation.

Arthur's childish innocence and sweet temperament are highlighted in IV.ii. When Hubert, King John's aide, shows him a warrant ordering that he be blinded, Arthur reminds him that he has shown him nothing but loving care and obedience since they have been together. He asks Hubert how he can carry out such a dreadful act. Shamed and moved by Arthur's continuing appeals, Hubert relents.

In disguise, Arthur bravely slips away from the prison and climbs onto the wall surrounding it. Believing that the only way to keep John from having him murdered is to escape, Arthur gathers his courage and leaps from the high wall, falling to his death on the stones below. A helpless victim of political power struggles while he lived, after his death he is a nagging reminder to John's conscience and a symbol around which the English nobles can gather.

Austria (Lymoges, Duke of Austria):

He is usually referred to in the play by his title, duke of Austria. He is a blend of two historical figures: the duke of Austria, who imprisoned Richard Cordelion and held him for ransom, and the Viscount Limoges, who killed Richard in battle. In *King John,* Austria allies himself with King Philip in Arthur's cause. The duke is the butt of many of the Bastard's taunts in II.i and III.i, especially with regard to the lion-skin robe he took from Richard's body and now wears himself. When Philip temporarily deserts Arthur, Austria does too, and Constance calls him a coward and a fool. He is killed in battle, and his head is borne in as a trophy, by the Bastard.

Bastard (Philip the Bastard):

See Philip the Bastard

Bigot (Lord Bigot):

An English nobleman, he appears in four scenes in the company of Pembroke and Salisbury. Bigot is among the nobles who discover Arthur's body; desert John and ally themselves with the French; learn that Lewis has betrayed them; and go to Swinstead Abbey to seek John's pardon.

Blanch of Spain:

Queen Elinor's granddaughter and King John's niece, she becomes a pawn in the struggle for the English throne. Marriages arranged for political and economic purposes have been standard practice throughout human history, particularly in the case of royalty. Blanch's submissive response to the suggestion that she marry Lewis is appropriate to her situation. Given her status as an essentially powerless female, she has little choice in the matter. But she tells Lewis that she doesn't love him. On the other hand, she adds, she sees nothing in him that is objectionable.

After the marriage has taken place and Pandulph has arrived on the scene, Lewis supports the cardinal's demand that King Philip renounce the terms of the marriage bargain. Blanch is appalled that her new husband would blacken their wedding day by going back on his word. She pleads with Lewis, naively asking what motive for action he could possibly have that is stronger than his love for her. Torn between loyalty to her uncle and the wedding vows she has just sworn, Blanch reluctantly chooses to remain with Lewis when the battle between the French and English resumes.

Cardinal Pandulph:

See Pandulph

Chatillion:

A French ambassador, he informs King John of King Philip's claim to the English throne, on behalf of Arthur, in the opening lines of the play. He appears again in II.i, bringing Philip the news that King John and the English forces have landed in France.

Citizen of Anglers:

He represents his city in negotiations with the kings of France and England. He appears on the city walls several times in II.i. In some editions of the play, the citizen who appears the last time is identified as Hubert.

During his first appearance, the citizen listens to lengthy speeches by John and Philip, then responds crisply and to the point. "We are the King of England's subjects," the

citizen reminds them (II.i.267), declaring that the city gates will be opened to whoever is proven to be the rightful king. The citizen is a cautious man and cannot be easily fooled. When the French and English heralds take turns declaring that their side is winning the battle, the citizen replies that, from his vantage point on the walls, it's clear that neither of them has gained the upper hand.

When Philip and John agree to turn their cannons on the city and level it, the citizen craftily suggests an alternative that will spare Angiers. With excessive compliments to Blanch and Lewis, he proposes that the hostilities could be brought to an end if the two young people were married. He goes on to promise that if this union takes place, the gates of the city will open to admit all of them. If not, he adds defiantly, no one will be admitted. His stubbornness sets off a chain of events that affects everyone.

Constance:

She is the widow of Geffrey□King John's older brother□and the mother of Arthur. Constance believes fiercely in her son Arthur's right to the throne. Indeed, she's obsessed by it. Constance is essentially powerless, however, and she must depend on allies such as the king of France, the duke of Austria, and Cardinal Pandulph. When she asserts Arthur's claim to the English crown, she represents the voice of conscience. Yet she is also proud and ambitious. There is strong evidence that she would be the power behind the throne if Arthur were king. Furthermore, Constance is frequently reckless in asserting and defending her son. When John and his mother Elinor land in France to contest Arthur's claim, Constance and Elinor are at each other's throats almost immediately, tossing insults back and forth, and charging each other with adultery. Though Arthur begs Constance to stop quarreling, she continues. She correctly calls John a usurper, but she goes on at such length and so extravagantly that even Philip asks her to hold her tongue.

Ordinarily in the company of the French court, she is absent when Philip deserts Arthur's cause in favor of peace and a lucrative marriage between his son and John's niece. When she learns of this, Constance is outraged. At first she cannot believe that Philip has betrayed Arthur. She refuses to seek out the king, demanding that he come to her. When Philip and Austria arrive, she lashes out at them, charging them with treachery and cowardice. Pandulph appears, and she turns to him for help. Constance is overjoyed when Philip agrees not to honor his newly made treaty with John.

Her final appearance in the play is in III.iv, after the English have captured Arthur. Constance is almost insane with grief; indeed, Pandulph suggests that she is out of her mind. She gruesomely invokes death as a release from her misery (IV.iii.25-36). She denies that she has lost her wits (IV.iii.45-60). And she vividly imagines the effects of imprisonment on her beloved son (IV.iii.82-89). Philip and Pandulph try to console her, telling her that her grief is excessive. She points out that they cannot possibly understand either the depths of maternal love or the extent of her loss. Tearing at her hair, she rushes from the room. Alternately despondent and defiant in her grief, Constance becomes one more victim of the political power struggle.

de Burgh (Hubert de Burgh):

John's aid and right-hand-man, he is chosen to carry out the king's order to murder Arthur. In III.iii, John slowly reveals to Hubert his malicious intentions. The king flatters Hubert, thanks him for his past services, and gradually takes him into his confidence. With implicit promises of great rewards, John tersely spells out what he wants: Arthur's death. Hubert vows that he shall have it. It is difficult to judge Hubert's behavior in this so-called "temptation scene." John is manipulating him, and as a powerless commoner he seems to have little choice except to carry out the king's wishes. Yet once John has made his intentions clear, Hubert seems ready and willing to murder Arthur.

When they have returned to England, however, Hubert appears prepared to blind the boy rather than kill him. Arthur begs him not to do it and makes an emotional appeal to the man who has become his friend. Hubert grits his teeth and tries to resist the child's pleas, but he relents. Realizing that he has put himself in grave jeopardy with this decision, Hubert tells Arthur he must give the king a false report of his death. When he does so, and the king informs his nobles that Arthur has died, they immediately suspect that Hubert has killed him.

In IV.ii, Hubert keeps up the pretense that Arthur is dead□and John tries to lay all the blame on him. The king lies, saying that Hubert has repeatedly urged that Arthur must be killed. Even when Hubert shows him the signed death warrant, the king continues to say that it's Hubert's fault. Frustrated and under attack, Hubert blurts out the truth that Arthur is still alive. The king commands him to bring the news to the outraged nobles, in hopes they will be pacified. But by the time Hubert catches up with them, they have already discovered Arthur's lifeless body.

Convinced that he murdered the boy, the nobles draw their swords and threaten to kill him. Hubert protests his innocence, yet only the presence of the Bastard prevents them from carrying out their threats. When the nobles leave, the Bastard turns on Hubert, demanding to know if he is guilty of this crime. Hubert assures him he had no part in Arthur's death. The Bastard believes him and asks him to carry out the mournful duty of bearing Arthur's body away. Some editions of *King John* follow the First Folio, a collection of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623, in which the last set of speeches by the citizen of Angiers is assigned to Hubert. In these editions it is Hubert, not an anonymous citizen, who proposes the match between Blanch and Lewis. If Hubert is indeed the one who effectively made King Philip drop his support of Arthur's cause, this provides one explanation for King John's reference in Ill.iii to the services that Hubert has rendered him in the past.

Elinor (Queen Elinor):

Historically, Eleanor of Aquitaine was Queen of France from 1137 until her divorce from Louis VII in 1152. That same year, she married Henry Plantagenet, Count of Anjou; when he became Henry II of England two years later, she became Queen of England. A gifted political strategist, Eleanor of Acquitance took part in several military campaigns,

sometimes leading her forces into battle. Eleanor and Henry II had five children. The oldest was Henry, who died before his father and thus never succeeded to the throne. Instead the second son, Richard Coeur-de-lion, became king when Henry II died in 1189. The third son, Geoffrey, married Constance of Brittainy and became the father of Arthur; Geffrey died three years before his father. John was the youngest son of Henry II and Eleanor; he succeeded to the throne upon the death of Richard in 1199. The family also included a daughter; she married Alfonso of Castile and became the mother of Blanche of Castile.

In the first half of *King John,* Elinor is her son John's closest adviser. She disputes the claim that her grandson Arthur is the rightful king of England □though she admits privately that John's possession of the throne is stronger than his right to it. When Philip the Bastard and Robert Faulconbridge present their legal dispute, Elinor is struck by the Bastard's resemblance to her late son, Richard Cordelion. She impulsively asks the young man if he will give up his share in the Faulconbridge estate and join the English expedition to France, and he quickly agrees to the proposal, leading John to pronounce him Richard's son.

Elinor and her daughter-in-law Constance quarrel whenever they meet. Their long-standing feud frequently erupts into nasty remarks and malicious charges. At II.i.122-23, Elinor accuses Constance of infidelity, referring to Arthur as a bastard. Constance hotly denies the charge, reminding Elinor that her first husband divorced her because of her own infidelity. They snipe at each other throughout the scene, trading insults and arguing heatedly about the merits of John's and Arthur's claims to the English throne.

When the battle near Angiers is temporarily halted so that each side can appeal to the citizens of Angiers, Elinor resumes her role as John's adviser. Showing her political skills and her understanding of strategy, Elinor urges John to approve the proposal that Blanch be married to Lewis. She tells John that if he provides "a dowry large enough" (II.i.469), the French will desert Arthur's cause and the crown will be safe. She prompts John to make them an offer quickly, and seize opportunity to appeal to their personal ambitions. Drawn by the promise of gaining title to England's French provinces □and a handsome sum of money as well□ Philip and Lewis agree to the match.

This is the highest point of Elinor's political influence. When Philip is persuaded by Pandulph to go back on the bargain, her appeal to Philip to keep his word is brief and ineffective. The last service she lends John is in III.iii, when she takes the captured Arthur aside so he won't hear the fateful conversation between John and Hubert. Elinor does not accompany her son back to England, but remains in France so that she may keep him informed about developments there. However, she is not able to warn him about Lewis's plan to invade England, because by then she is dead.

English Herald:

In II.i, he prematurely reports to the citizens of Angiers that English forces will soon achieve total victory on the battlefield nearby, and he asks them to admit John into the city.

English Messenger:

On two occasions, an English messenger brings John important news. In IV.ii, he tells the king of a large invasion force from France, led by Lewis. He further reports that Queen Elinor has died and that Constance is rumored to be dead. In V.iii, the messenger brings word from the Bastard that John should retire from the field of battle; he also tells the king that French supply ships have run aground and been destroyed.

Essex (Earl of Essex):

In the play's first scene, the earl of Essex informs John that two men who are embroiled in a legal dispute want the king to settle the matter for them.

Executioners:

Guards at an English prison, they are instructed by Hubert to assist him in blinding Arthur. In response to Hubert's signal, they come out of hiding, with ropes and hot irons. When Arthur begs that they be sent away, Hubert orders them to leave.

Faulconbridge (Lady Faulconbridge):

She is the widow of Sir Robert Faulconbridge and the mother of two sons: Philip and Robert. She appears near the close of Act I, furious at the slurs that have been cast on her honor by her son Robert. But when Philip urges her to tell him who his father was, Lady Faulconbridge admits her infidelity, telling Philip that his father was not her husband, but Richard Cordelion.

Faulconbridge (Robert Faulconbridge):

The second son of Lady Faulconbridge, Robert joins his half-brother Philip in appealing to King John to decide which one is the legal heir of the late Sir Robert Faulconbridge. Robert asserts that Philip is the son of Richard Cordelion (King Richard I), King John's elder brother. When Philip renounces his claim, Robert becomes his father's sole heir.

French Herald:

In II.i, he addresses the citizens of Angiers, falsely claiming that the French have nearly gained the victory on the nearby battlefield. He demands that they open the city gates and acknowledge Arthur as their king.

French Messenger:

In V.v, he tells Lewis that before Melune died of a mortal wound, he persuaded the English noblemen to leave the French side. The messenger also informs Lewis that his supply ships have run aground in shallow waters.

Gurney (James Gurney):

Lady Faulconbridge's servant, his only appearance is in the first scene of the play. Gurney addresses Lady Faulconbridge's older son by his given name, Philip, and the Bastard pretends to be offended.

Henry (Prince Henry):

A young man who is the son and heir of King John of England, Henry attends his dying father and receives vows of allegiance from the Bastard and the English nobles in V.vii. Historically, Prince Henry was nine years old when he succeeded to the English throne in 1216.

Hubert de Burgh:

See de Burgh

John (King John of England):

The king of England, he is the son of Elinor and uncle to Arthur and Blanch. Historically, he became king in 1199 upon the death of his brother Richard I, who had named him his successor two years earlier. John is reported to have been a wicked, tyrannical monarch. Yet Elizabethan historians praised him for being the only English king before Henry VIII to openly defy the pope. King John's defiance later turned to submissiveness, and he eventually acknowledged Rome's authority in English affairs.

His noblemen supported him in his contest with the pope, but when he gave up the fight, they turned on him. They threatened a civil war unless he made many concessions to them; these concessions were formally preserved in the document known as Magna Carta, which John signed in 1215. John reigned until his death in 1216. According to legend, he was fatally poisoned by a monk.

Although he is the title character of the play, John is not a typical hero□even though he often behaves like one in Acts I through III. In this portion of the play, he keeps his passions in check whenever the circumstances call for clear thinking. He is . In the first half of *King John,* Elinor is her son John's closest adviser. She disputes the claim that her grandson Arthur is the rightful king of England□though she admits privately that John's possession of the throne is stronger than his right to it." willing to go to war to defend his throne, and he reacts to the French challenge with courage and determination. Yet he treats his political enemies and their representatives with respect. He is personally gracious toward Chatillion despite his hostile announcement, and he courteously sees to it that the ambassador is given safe passage out of England. John demonstrates keen judgment of people□ and thorough knowledge of the law□when Robert Faulconbridge and Philip the Bastard appeal to him to settle the issue of their disputed inheritance. He is delighted by the Bastard's quick wit and admires the young man's vigorous spirit. When the Bastard accepts Elinor's suggestion that he give up his claim and go with them to France, King John knights him and formally names him Richard Plantagent. John's attitude toward the king of France, when they meet outside the walls of Angiers, is direct and to the point. As Philip waxes eloquent on the justness of Arthur's claim, John is a man of few words. But when the two kings take turns addressing the citizens of Angiers, John's speech is as fiery as Philip's. A courageous and energetic leader in the battle near Angiers, John is also a shrewd negotiator. He is convinced that every man has his price, and he accurately calculates what it will cost to make Philip drop his support of Arthur. John's defiance of Pandulph most likely would have delighted Elizabethan audiences. He disputes the Church's authority in England and defends his country's independence of papal rule. Adding insult to injury, he accuses the Church's priests of corruption. John is generally silent as Pandulph tries to persuade Philip to annul the peace treaty with the English. But when the French king bows to Pandulph's authority, John is enraged. Swearing that nothing but the "dearest-valued blood of France" (III.i.343) will cool his temper, he calls for an immediate resumption of war.

John's political judgment first becomes questionable when he takes Hubert into his confidence about what he intends to do about Arthur. The king knows that as long as the boy lives, he represents a threat to John's possession of the crown. At the beginning of what is sometimes referred to as the "temptation scene" (III.iii), the king flatters Hubert, thanks him for his past services, and promises to reward him richly in the future. John gradually reveals his plan. When Hubert vows that he will do whatever the king wishes, John drops any pretense that he means well toward his nephew. A chilling exchange between John and Hubert leaves no doubt as to Arthur's fate: "Death." / "My lord." / "A grave." / "He shall not live." / "Enough" (III.iii.65-66). John is wickedly manipulative in this scene. Yet Hubert's quick and positive response to his proposal may be taken as a sign that Hubert is as guilty of intended murder as is the king.

John's political and moral downfall is precipitous in Acts IV and V. He offends his nobles by having himself crowned king once again. When Hubert gives him the false report of Arthur's death, John seems shocked and says that he regrets trying to secure his throne at the expense of the boy's life. His emotions in turmoil, John is further horrified by a series of devastating reports: the French invasion force has arrived in England, his

mother is dead, and his subjects are listening to rumors that he means to give up his crown. Hubert adds to the king's fears with tales of supernatural omens and reports that the common people are on the verge of rebellion. John lashes out at Hubert, saying that he was the one who first suggested that Arthur's death was politically expedient. If you weren't nearby when I was pondering the deed, John charges, and if you weren't such a villainous person, this never would have happened. Stung by these remarks, Hubert admits that Arthur is still alive. The king hopes that when the nobles hear the good news they will come to his assistance against the French.

In the meantime, John desperately looks for other ways out of his dire political situation. He makes a bargain with Pandulph. In exchange for John accepting his crown from the hands of the cardinal□thus acknowledging the Church as the supreme authority in England□Pandulph will persuade Lewis to return to France with his army. The Bastard brings John more bad news, but he also urges the king to rise to the occasion□to show boldness and inspire confidence in his subjects. However, John's growing helplessness and dependency on others, and his capitulation to Rome, clearly indicate that he is no longer a competent ruler. Recognizing his inability to act forcefully and effectively, King John puts the Bastard in charge of gathering English forces to meet the enemy. During the battle that follows, John tells Hubert that he is troubled by a fever and sick at heart. Even the news of the French retreat fails to revive his spirits. He departs for Swinstead Abbey, so ill that he cannot ride his horse and must be carried there.

John finds death rather than recovery at Swinstead Abbey. A monk at the abbey puts poison in the king's food. In the abbey's orchard, where Prince Henry and several noblemen have gathered, John is carried in on a stretcher, wracked by fever and shrunken by dehydration. The last news he hears before he dies is the Bastard's inaccurate report that the French army is on its way to Swinstead Abbey. Ridden by guilt, he dies in agony, unaware that his crown and his succession have been preserved.

Lady Faulconbridge:

See Faulconbridge

Lewis (Lewis the Dolphin [Dauphin]):

The son of King Philip of France, Lewis is sometimes referred to as the Dauphin (or Dolphin) □that is, the king's eldest son. An ambitious young man, he is easily manipulated by Pandulph. As leader of the French invasion of England, however, he is a capable strategist. Lewis is dogged by bad luck, and as his fortunes decline, he displays a vicious capacity for double-crossing his allies. Though he is present throughout the exchanges between Philip and John outside the walls of Angiers, he has nothing to say until it is suggested that the way to settle the dispute between the two countries is for him to marry John's niece Blanch. Lewis is taken by surprise, and his response to the suggestion is awkward, to say the least. When his father asks him how he feels about

the scheme, Lewis replies that he finds in Blanch's eyes a mirror of himself. Seeing his image there, he says that he never loved himself until this moment. This tribute to love draws a cutting remark from the Bastard.

After the French are handed a devastating defeat at Angiers, Lewis is humiliated. Pandulph tells him to look on the bright side and view Arthur's capture as a golden opportunity. John will surely see to it that Arthur is killed, the cardinal points out, and this will clear the way for Lewis to claim the English throne in the name of his wife Blanch. Lewis agrees with Pandulph's advice to invade England, and they go off together to get Philip's approval of the idea. Speedily arriving in England with a large army, Lewis at first encounters little resistance. Indeed, the citizens of several English cities greet him with open arms. He forms an alliance with some English nobles who have rebelled against John, and his fortunes seem on the rise. But French ships bringing supplies to his forces are wrecked off the English coast, and the opposition assembled by the Bastard blocks his further progress.

Lewis appears to have become a confident young man, yet he has learned how to exploit other people's self-interest to his own advantage□and how to betray them when their usefulness is over. When Pandulph tells Lewis that he should withdraw his troops from England, he reminds the cardinal who recommended the invasion in the first place. Lewis refuses to abandon his attempt to conquer England. He orders that his English allies be killed□ but they learn about this from Count Melune and leave before the order can be carried out. With the tide of war running against him, Lewis sends Pandulph to John with a proposal for an honorable peace. Even before he knows what John's response will be, Lewis leaves for France, his cause abandoned.

Lymoges (Lymoges, Duke of Austria):

See Austria

Melune (Count Melune):

A French nobleman and a member of Lewis's invasion force, he witnesses the agreement between Lewis and the English nobles in V.ii. Fatally wounded in battle, he survives long enough to ease his conscience by informing Salisbury, Pembroke, and Recognizing his inability to act forcefully and effectively, King John puts the Bastard in charge of gathering English forces to meet the enemy." Bigot that Lewis has ordered their deaths that night. He urges them to seek out John and beg forgiveness.

Pandulph (Cardinal Pandulph):

A cardinal of the Church of Rome, he acts as the pope's ambassador to the courts of France and England. He represents one side of a central issue in the play: the conflict between the Church of Rome and the English monarchy. In a world where virtually everyone is consumed by the struggle for power, Cardinal Pandulph is a master of

political manipulation. He uses the weapons at hand□excommunication and the threat of eternal damnation□to bring rebellious kings back into line. Adept at exploiting situations for his own purposes, Pandulph teaches Lewis how to turn Arthur's probable death into an opportunity for advancement.

Pandulph's first appearance is in III.i, when he confronts John near Angiers and demands to know why he has kept the newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury from assuming his post. John is defiant, and Pandulph explodes. He declares that John is henceforth "cursed and excommunicate" (III.i.173). For good measure, he adds that every English subject who rebels against John will be blessed, and whoever should kill him will be canonized "and worshipped as a saint" (III.i.177).

Pandulph turns next to Philip, threatening him with the curse of the Church unless he releases John's hand and renounces their newly achieved treaty of friendship. At first, the French king wavers, so Pandulph launches into an intricate argument, reminding Philip that his primary responsibility is to defend the church and treat its enemies as his enemies. Since your first vow was to the church, he tells Philip, it takes precedence over any agreements you made after that. The king still seems undecided, but when Pandulph threatens to "denounce a curse upon his head" (III.i. 139), Philip drops John's hand□symbolizing an end to their agreement. The French and English take up their arms once again, and the battle is renewed.

When the English win a decisive victory, Philip and Lewis are dejected, but Pandulph is undismayed. The cardinal is left alone with Lewis. He points out to the young man that John is likely to have Arthur murdered, and with Arthur dead, Lewis can claim the English throne on behalf of his wife Blanch. Assuring him that the English will rise in revolt when they hear of Arthur's murder, Pandulph proposes that Lewis sail to England with French troops and turn the English rebellion to his own advantage. Lewis agrees to the plan. Pandulph is usually able to talk people into doing what he wants them to do. Sometimes this requires manipulation, and sometimes it necessitates the exercise of political and spiritual power. In a scene that would have outraged Elizabethan audiences, King John yields his crown to the cardinal.

Pandulph places it back on John's head, reminding him that the pope is the source of his "sovereign greatness and authority" (V.i.4). The brief ceremony ended, John reminds Pandulph that since he has formally submitted to Rome, it's now time for the cardinal to carry out his part of the bargain: to halt the French invasion. In good humor, Pandulph declares that he will have no trouble ending the mission that began with his encouragement. But when the cardinal goes to Lewis and tells him to make peace with John, Lewis refuses. By the close of this scene, Lewis has completely disregarded Pandulph, refusing to listen to him any more. However, in the play's final scene, Salisbury reports that Pandulph has come to Swinstead Abbey with an offer of peace from Lewis□and that the cardinal is in charge of working out the terms of an agreement. Though at times he is prevented from achieving his goals immediately, in the end Pandulph has gotten what he wants most: John's submission to Rome. Ever mindful that he speaks for the pope, who in turn speaks for God, Pandulph is serenely confident that the church will eventually defeat its enemies. But it should be noted that he uses his

keen intellect and political skills to bring this about, rather than leaving the outcome in the hands of God.

Pembroke (Earl of Pembroke):

As an earl, Pembroke is one of the foremost noblemen in England. Each time he appears in the play he is in the company of the earl of Salisbury, and their actions always coincide: as one moves from indignation to vengeance or from rebellion to loyalty, so does the other.

Though Pembroke is frequently in attendance on King John in the first half of the play, his first words are in IV.ii, when he protests that John's second coronation was an unnecessary demonstration of his right to the crown. To the king's request that his nobles tell him what reform they want him to undertake, Pembroke replies that he should free Arthur. Pembroke argues that it is disgraceful to keep a young boy imprisoned and that if John is confident of his right to be king, he has no reason to feel threatened by Arthur. When the king reports that Arthur is dead, Pembroke mocks the suggestion that he died of natural causes. Predicting that dire consequences will flow from Arthur's death, Pembroke sets off with Salisbury for the prison where the young boy had been held.

When they come upon Arthur's body, Pembroke bursts into a rage and declares that this is the most evil murder of all time. Refusing the Bastard's plea to suspend judgment and charging Hubert with the crime, Pembroke and the other lords storm off. As they leave, they announce their intention to meet Lewis, who has invaded England and declared himself the rightful king of England.

The meeting takes place in V.ii, where Pembroke and the others seal their bargain with the French. For Elizabethans, the nobles' betrayal of their duty to England would have been treachery of the highest order. The fact that they will personally profit from their rebellion against John makes their crime even more vicious. As with Salisbury, Pembroke's motives are ambiguous. The grief and fury he expresses over Arthur's death seem genuine. But like his friend, he seems to have a gift for rationalizing actions that are based on self-interest and personal gain. He is by turns a passionate defender of youthful innocence and a willing traitor. And when his usefulness to Lewis has ended, Pembroke is at the mercy of a man who, like himself, is prepared to abandon his principles if he believes the situation calls for it.

Peter of Pomfret:

A self-proclaimed prophet, he predicts that King John will give up his crown on the next Ascension Day. Brought to court by the Bastard in IV.ii, Peter is questioned by John and imprisoned. In V.i, after John has yielded his crown to Pandulph, the king realizes that Peter's prediction has come true.

Philip (King Philip of France):

He is King John's principal political foe in the first half of the play. As Arthur and Constance's chief ally, Philip is not always dependable. His decisions to abandon Arthur's claim by making peace with John, and then to revoke the treaty at Pandulph's command, raise several questions. Is personal gain his principal motive? Is he a rationalizer or a hypocrite? Does he finally agree with the cardinal that his first duty is to the Church□or is he terrified by the prospect of eternal damnation? In an amoral world dominated by the struggle for political power, King Philip frequently appears torn between honor and self-interest.

He sends an ambassador to John, boldly proclaiming his support of Arthur's claim to the English throne and threatening to wage war on the young man's behalf. He lays siege to the city of Angiers to force its citizens to accept Arthur as England's king. When John lands in France, Philip calls him a usurper and delivers a stirring defense of Arthur's cause. But his resolution melts at the prospect of a lucrative marriage between his son and John's niece. He agrees to the union□and to the terms of the agreement□though he knows that Constance will be angry when she learns he has abandoned Arthur's claim and made peace with John.

When Pandulph demands that Philip revoke his treaty with John, he refuses at first. He continues to clasp John's hand as a sign of their friendship. He points out to Pandulph that he has given his word to John and that he cannot break that vow. Even after listening to Pandulph's intricate argument about his first loyalty being to the Church□and to the appeals by Lewis, Constance and Austria that he obey the cardinal□Philip continues to waver. However, when Pandulph declares that he is prepared to "denounce a curse upon his head" (III.i.319), Philip drops John's hand and breaks their agreement.

This brings a renewal of hostilities. Philip is plunged into gloom when the French are defeated, and his spirits are not improved by the appearance of Constance. His repeated attempts to console her are futile. When she rushes off, he follows, seeming to fear that she will take her life. Philip has no active role in Lewis's invasion of England, and he disappears from the play after Act III.

Philip the Bastard (also called Richard Plantagenet):

Legally, he is the first son of Lord and Lady Faulconbridge. Actually, he is the son of King Richard I and Lady Faulconbridge. Historically, there is no substantial evidence of such a person, though at least one Elizabethan historian reported that Richard I had a bastard son named Philip. After King John acknowledges Philip as Richard's son in Li, Philip also becomes known as Richard (after his father) Plantagenet (the family name of the members of the royal family).

In *King John,* the Bastard assumes many forms. He is an ambiguous figure, and his character resists simple definitions or explanations. Sometimes he stands outside the

action and comments on it, and sometimes he is in the thick of things. In the first half of the play, he is a soldier of fortune, seizing opportunities as they present themselves. Impudent and frequently disrespectful, he lends an element of comedy to a play that is otherwise grim and relentless in its depiction of the realities of power politics. In the second half of *King John,* he tries to fill the gaping hole in England's leadership created by John's weakness. It's debatable whether the Bastard is motivated by loyalty, patriotism, or some less admirable quality.

Philip the Bastard and his brother Robert present themselves at the English court in the play' s first scene, asking the king to settle their dispute. The Bastard shows no hesitation in acknowledging that his mother may have been unfaithful to her husband. When Elinor invites him to desert his claim to the Faulconbridge estate and enlist in the English invasion of France, he quickly agrees. King John knights him and formally gives him the name his father bore: Richard Plantagenet. The others depart, and he is left alone to consider the dramatic change in his fortunes. He imagines what it will be like to spend his time now in the company of people of higher rank, learning to be as deceitful as he believes them to be.

He accompanies John and Elinor to France, and treats the French royalty and courtiers insolently. The duke of Austria is his particular target. The Bastard mocks Austria's vanity in presuming to wear Richard's lion-skin robe. Indeed, he continues to make this joke at Austria's expense throughout Acts II and III, frequently commenting contemptuously on the duke's skinny legs.

The Bastard has a realistic view of life. Hearing John's and Philip's bold and competing addresses to the citizens of Angiers (II.i.206-86), the Bastard remarks to himself that such royal disputes generally mean suffering and death for soldiers and subjects. He suggests to the two kings that they settle the question of Angiers' loyalty by turning their cannons on the city and leveling it. A citizen of Angiers suggests an alternative□the union of France and England through the marriage of Lewis and Blanch. When the proposal is approved by everyone involved, and he is left alone, the Bastard marvels at the insanity he sees around him: "Mad world, mad kings, mad composition" (II.i.561). In this soliloquy, he considers the role of commodity, or selfinterest, in men's lives. He says that he despises it□ yet he is honest enough to note that up until now he hasn't really had any self-interest to protect or promote. If the situation changes, he tells himself, he may very well find himself as treacherous as those presently in power.

In the battle that follows King Philip's desertion of the peace treaty, the Bastard slays Austria, cuts off his head, and reclaims Cordelion's lionskin robe. The victory over France achieved, John sends him back to England to wring money out of the Church's monasteries to meet his expenses. Mocking the symbols used in the ritual of excommunication, the Bastard swears by "Bell, book, and candle" (III.iii.12) to carry out the king's orders.

Indeed, he later reports to John that he has "sped among the clergymen" (IV.ii.141) and forced them to contribute to John's treasury. While carrying out this mission, he has encountered the selfproclaimed prophet Peter of Pomfret, whom he brings to the

English court. He also informs John that he has met Bigot and Salisbury, who are outraged by the death of Arthur. John entreats the Bastard to go after them and persuade them to come back. Carrying out the king's orders, the Bastard comes upon several nobles who have discovered Arthur's lifeless body. When they jump to the conclusion that John was responsible, he urges restraint. But when he and Hubert are left alone, he turns on him, genuinely appalled by Arthur's death and demanding to know if Hubert had any part in it. He accepts Hubert's denials as the truth and orders him to bear the body away.

From this point on, the Bastard is John's principal connection to the world outside the court. He is also the king's most reliable ally. He brings the king word that Englishmen are in revolt against him, but he urges John to remain steadfast. Trying to put backbone into the fearful John, the Bastard argues that if John puts up a brave front, people will see him as the same courageous and determined leader he has been in the past. The Bastard angrily disagrees with John's decision to negotiate with the French, but he accepts the king's request that he take charge of assembling a military force to confront the invaders.

Part of his duty to John is to negotiate with the French. He meets with Lewis and is passionately defiant. He threatens that John is prepared to hound Lewis and his army out of England□even though he knows that's hardly an accurate description of the king's present abilities. When Lewis suggests his words are nothing but vain boasting, the Bastard insists that John still represents a power to be reckoned with.

The Bastard arrives at Swinstead Abbey only moments before John dies. He is stunned by John's death. He promises his dead sovereign that he will avenge him and then meet him in heaven. When Salisbury tells him that the French have given up their invasion and are pursuing a peace treaty with England, the Bastard calms down. He offers his allegiance to Prince Henry and, in a passionate speech on behalf of patriotism, concludes the play with an appeal to all Englishmen to set their country's interests above their own.

To some readers, the Bastard appears to be two separate and distinct characters in the first and second halves of the play. To others, he seems to grow and develop during the course of *King John,* shedding his youthful cynicism for a realistic perspective on people and what motivates them. He freely exchanges his birthright for the dubious honor of being called the bastard son of Richard I. He taunts and teases people who outrank him. Quickwitted and intelligent, his great personal charm sometimes comes across as arrogance. In his " commodity "'Speech (II.i.561-98), he seems shocked at the difference between what men say and what they mean privately. But when he commits himself to John's cause, it's not clear whether he has chosen to act on principle or self-interest.

The Bastard understands as well as everyone else that John has usurped the throne from Arthur. But he remains loyal to the king, representing him to others as a healthy, vigorous ruler. Perhaps he recognizes that at the moment John is the only man around whom loyal Englishmen can gather. Or perhaps he now believes there are no moral

absolutes in politics—that sometimes it's necessary to use unethical methods to achieve honorable goals. In the course of the play, he becomes increasingly perceptive about people and what motivates them. It isn't clear, however, whether he develops a similar understanding of himself.

Salisbury (Earl of Salisbury):

One of the highest ranking English noblemen in the play, the Earl of Salisbury often seems to waver between honor and self-interest. His behavior and In an amoral world dominated by the struggle for political power, King Philip frequently appears torn between honor and self-interest." his motives are complex. If the king is guilty of an outrageous murder, Salisbury and the others would seem to have a worthy reason to refuse to follow the king any longer. But English nobles joining forces with an invader who threatens English sovereignty and national unity is treachery. And striking a bargain that will yield personal gain makes the justice of the rebels' motives questionable.

Salisbury appears only briefly in the first half of the play, but he is a prominent figure in Acts IV and V. In IV.ii, Salisbury says that he suspects the king means to harm Arthur. When John announces that the young prince is dead, Salisbury seems certain that foul play is involved. The first indication that he and the other nobles mean to desert John comes in IV.iii, where he describes to his friends a conversation he has had with Count Melune. Moments later, Salisbury and the others discover Arthur's body. Salisbury immediately declares that the boy was murdered and, kneeling beside Arthur's body, declares he will no longer serve the king. However, his earlier contact with the leaders of the French invasion raises the question of whether Arthur's alleged murder is really Salisbury's motive for rebellion or merely an excuse to justify a course of action he has already decided to take.

When Salisbury and the other English nobles meet with Lewis and Melune, they sign a document that outlines the terms of their alliance—particularly what share the nobles will have in the spoils of war. In an extended speech, Salisbury lays the blame for his rebellion on "the infection of the time" (V.ii.20), declaring that circumstances have forced him to take this action. Weeping, he laments that he and his friends were "born to see so sad an hour as this" (V.ii.26). His language is so exaggerated that Lewis mocks the sincerity of his emotions. After Salisbury and his friends learn from Melune that they have been "bought and sold" (V.iv.10), they flee to avoid having their heads chopped off. Salisbury vows to become, once again, an obedient follower of the man who embodies true English authority: "our great King John" (V.iv.57). He goes to Swinstead Abbey in search of the king, and he is in attendance when John dies. When the Bastard formally vows his allegiance to Prince Henry, Salisbury quickly follows with his own promise of love and faithful service forever.

Further Study

Beaurline, L. A. Introduction to *King John,* by William Shakespeare, 1-57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Beaurline provides extensive discussions of several aspects of the play□including style, themes, and characterization□and a detailed history of stage productions. In his analysis of the game of power politics in *King John,* Beaurline demonstrates numerous similarities and contrasts between characters.

Braunmiller, A. R. Introduction to *The Life and Death of King John,* by William Shakespeare, 1-93. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Braunmiller discusses the likely date and probable sources of the play and describes its theatrical reputation and stage history. Additionally, he offers extended remarks on the language of *King John* and on several central thematic issues: the political power struggle, relations between older and younger generations, and legitimate versus unlawful inheritance.

Burgoyne, Sidney C. "Cardinal Pandulph and the 'Curse of Rome.'" *College Literature* IV, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 232-40.

Burgoyne traces the cardinal's impact on the play's dramatic action, concluding that Pandulph's principal function is to authorize rebellion and create political chaos.

Calderwood, James L. "Commodity and Honour in *King*

John." University of Toronto Quarterly XXIX, no. 3 (April 1960): 341-56.

Calderwood deals with the conflict between honor and personal gain in *King John,* and shows how this conflict is personified in both John and the Bastard. The king's tragedy arises from his decision to violate honor and virtue by ordering Arthur's murder, while by contrast the Bastard gradually discards self-interest in favor of principled action.

Dusinberre, Juliet. *"King John* and Embarrassing Women." *Shakespeare Survey* 42 (1990): 37-52.

Dusinberre claims that up to the beginning of Act IV, the dramatic action of *King John* is dominated by its female characters. Each of them in turn□Constance, Queen Elinor, Lady Faulconbridge, and Blanch repeatedly interrupts official (masculine) conversation and speeches, thus undermining the power and questioning the judgment of various male authority figures.

Kastan, David Scott. "To Set a Form upon that Indiges': Shakespeare's Figures of History." *Comparative Drama* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 1-16.

Kastan focuses on the Bastard's skillful manipulation of language and events in Acts IV and V. His verbal dexterity transforms John into a monarch who seems worthy of the loyalty of the English nobles, Kastan declares; it also mirrors Shakespeare's creation of characters and history in *King John.*

Manheim, Michael. "The Four Voices of the Bastard." In *King John: New Perspectives,* edited by Deborah T. Curren-Aquino, 126-35. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989.

Manheim traces the Bastard's increasing understanding of political reality and of himself in the course of the play. At each stage in his development, Manheim points out, the Bastard uses distinctive manners of speech that reveal his growing commitment to employ any means available to achieve his goal of political . unity.

Price, Jonathan Reeve. "King John and Problematic Art." *Shakespeare Quarterly* XXI, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 25-28.

Price sees deliberate ambiguities in the character of King John, with intentional shifts in the way he is portrayed. Although dramatic events are resolved at the conclusion of Act V, we are not told what to think about John and the series of calamities that befall him; rather we are free to choose a range of interpretations about the meaning of his collapse and ultimate ruin.

Van de Water, Julia C. "The Bastard in *King John." Shakespeare Quarterly* XI, no. 2 (Spring 1960): 137-46.

Van de Water describes the Bastard as two separate and distinct characters under one name. She sees no connection at all between the witty, hard-headed realist of Acts I through III and the loyal English patriot of Acts IV and V. The Bastard is clearly the liveliest character in the play, she admits, but he is certainly not its "hero."

Wormersley, David. "The Politics of Shakespeare's *King John." Review of English Studies* XL, no. 160 (November 1989): 497-515.

A central issue in *King John,* according to Wormersley, is how to live in a world without fundamental values or principles. He focuses his discussion of this question on the Bastard's attempts to find his way in this "mad world" of dramatic reversals of fortune and violent political upheavals.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Shakespeare for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

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.

Citing Shakespeare for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Shakespeare for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□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.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SfS, the following form may be used:

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.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Shakespeare for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Shakespeare for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535